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Travel

20

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collector's edition



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Twenty years of fun:
trekking northern Peru

Flannel panel

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Cover photograph: iStock



20 years young



Happy birthday us! November/December 1995 was the first ever edition of *Adventure Travel*. Back then adventurous travel took place without help from the internet; there were no low-cost airlines and fleece was the new fabric on the block. Most of the country was far too miserable to go anywhere mind – Take That had just split up.

Active travel is more popular than ever. A healthy lifestyle has become important, and people are looking to the outdoors to find respite from the daily grind. Everyone's at it – as part of our birthday festivities we meet six young adventurers who between them have climbed Everest, walked across Mongolia and climbed every Munro (p14). A few pages later there's Sir Robin Knox-Johnston, 76 and after a new racing boat. And we showcase 20 of the world's greatest adventures to add to your (probably ever-growing) bucket list.

Thank you for supporting *Adventure Travel* over the years. Even Take That are still going – now that's a reason to celebrate...

Rosie

To the future...

What does the future hold for the world of adventure? That's what we asked some of our contributors this month. Here's what they said – and here's to the next 20 years...



Colin Nicholson

"In snowsports, there'll be more freeride areas, with resorts encouraging riders to break away from the piste. More skiers will discover touring."

Colin recommends Jasna in Slovakia as a new low-cost ski destination, p47.



Sharon Wray

"The term 'adventure' will be redefined as it becomes more accessible to the masses. 'Adventuring' used to be something other people did; now everyone can have a go."

Sharon is exploring Bosnia and Macedonia, p94.



Lucy Grewcock

"With increasing concern over the damage caused to over-visited sites, we'll see a stronger trend towards lesser-known adventures both in far flung places and on our doorsteps."

Lucy is following in the footsteps of James Bond, p43.

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A scenic view of a snow-capped mountain range under a blue sky with wispy clouds. The foreground is covered in green vegetation.

GO NOW

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EXPLOSIVE MOUNTAIN BIKING

Now that's what we call mountain biking. This is Villarrica, one of Chile's most active volcanoes. Villarrica is in the Chilean Lake District, about 470 miles south of the capital Santiago. As well as snow-capped volcanoes, it's an area of lush farmland, dense forest, deep lakes hidden in the mountains, waterfalls and thermal springs. Other recommended adventures are rafting, kayaking, hiking and skiing... we're sold. See www.chile.travel for more.



ÖTZI SKI TOURING

Stunning. Ski touring is one of our favourite winter sports, and the lesser-known Ötztal Alps, along the border of Austria and Italy, are a perfect ski touring playground, with glaciers, great powder and high peaks. Tyrolean hospitality in the mountain huts is impressive too and, for even more fun, it's also where Ötzi the 5,300-year-old ice man was found. Check out Adventure Base's Ötzal Haute Route trip, www.adventurebase.com.

GO NOW



Photo: Miha Habjan

GO NOW

SLOVAKIAN SPECTACULAR

"Many British skiers assume that skiing in Eastern Europe is for beginners and intermediates only. But having been tested by Jasna's convex black slopes as well as the off-piste, I can assure them they are wrong," says AT's Colin Nicholson. Not only that, but there are new budget flights to Slovakia, and transfer times are short. Bring it on... and find out more on page 47.



INTRODUCING ...



**EXPLORERS'
COLLECTION**

Curated adventures for today's explorers

Now we are 20

To celebrate *Adventure Travel* being 20 years young, we asked some of today's similarly youthful up-and-coming adventurers to tell us their plans for the future...

Mollie Hughes, 25

■ Who is Mollie Hughes?

I grew up in South Devon but now live in Edinburgh. I began climbing mountains when I was 17 and since then have been lucky enough to take part in expeditions to mountain ranges all over the world. In May 2012, at the age of 21, I became one of the youngest British climbers to summit Mount Everest.

'The more people that take part in adventure, the better'

■ What's your next challenge?

In spring 2016 I am hoping to return to Everest and climb it via the North Col from Tibet. No British woman has climbed Everest from both sides, so it needs to be done! I would love to climb this route and look down on the south side of Everest where I spent two months in 2012. I've launched a CrowdFunding campaign to raise the money to make this ambition a reality.

■ What does the future hold for the world of adventure and exploration?

I am most excited about the increased accessibility of adventure. Adventure helps develop people in many ways, from increasing their self belief and levels of perseverance to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. The more people that take part in adventure the better.
www.crowdfunder.co.uk/everest-from-both-sides-first-british-woman



Doing the double:
Mollie Hughes



Going local:
Will Copestake

Will Copestake, 25

■ Who is Will Copestake?

I am an outdoor instructor and kayak guide. Since a young age I have been drawn to adventure. Having explored New Zealand for 10 months, finding a love of wilderness on its Great Walks aged 18, I did a degree in environmental science with outdoor education, spending my holidays exploring and pushing my limits in longer journeys. Crossing Iceland on foot over a summer holiday as part of a three-month expedition to camp and live 'student style' on a budget of £600 I discovered a love of empty spaces.

I am most known for my recent expedition 'The Machair to Munro Project,' which was designed to discover my own country. In 364 days I explored Scotland by kayaking alone around its coastline and climbing all 282 Munro mountains, cycling between. I discovered a love in my home wilderness and local culture.

'There is adventure all around us, you do not have to go far, nor go big, to find it'

■ What's your next challenge?

Heading back to the Southern Hemisphere to spend a season working in Patagonia. I will be spending 20 days a month as an expedition kayak guide and the rest will be lost in exploring the Chilean wilderness. Then in April I am travelling to Norway for a couple of months, kayaking and mountaineering with a friend. We hope to follow our bows to the weather and chase spontaneous adventures all over the country. Our one big aim is to paddle around the NordKapp.

■ What does the future hold for the world of adventure and exploration?

Some might say that true adventure has

past; perhaps it is true that the 'golden age' of exploration has come and gone. The great passages and last unknowns are largely mapped and trodden. But the world of adventure is stronger than ever.

My journey in Scotland was a great example of this. I was not the first to kayak solo round Scotland, and I am the 5,470th person to summit all the Munros. Yet I achieved an experience I will never forget.

There is adventure all around us, you do not have to go far, nor go big, to find it. It can be everything from camping in your own back garden to wandering around your local hillside.

Adventure need not be about finding new routes, nor breaking new records. It is simply exploring and finding passion in the gaps you might find between. Adventure is something that is new and exciting for you, both in places you go and people you meet along the way.

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'It's becoming harder to come up with original ideas'



Alex Staniforth, 20

■ Who is Alex Staniforth?

I'm a mountaineer, ultra cyclist and ambassador, focusing on big challenges at home and abroad, while at the same time raising nearly £30,000 for charity and inspiring others through motivational speaking. I completed the three peaks challenge solo on my bike last year in four days and attempted to climb Everest in 2014 and 2015.

■ What's your next challenge?

In November I'm in the Andes to climb Aconcagua, the highest peak in South America. I'm also working on my upcoming book *Icefall* and have a world record attempt on the horizon.

■ What does the future hold for the world of adventure and exploration?

We'll see! I've noticed how more and more people are getting into the world of adventure. There's very little left uncharted, so it's becoming harder to come up with original ideas and push the boundaries – I'm excited to see what people come up with! ►

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'Climbing is becoming more mainstream, but the adventure element will remain'

Calum Muskett, 22

■ Who is Calum Muskett?

I'm a professional climber, mountain instructor and writer living in North Wales. I've climbed big walls and mountains across the world and made several first ascents of faces and routes from Patagonia up to the Arctic Circle.

■ What's your next challenge?

An expedition to Baffin Island to climb the Polar Sun Spire.

■ What does the future hold for the world of climbing and adventure?

Climbing is becoming more of a mainstream sport, but the adventure element will remain the same.

www.muskettmountaineering.co.uk,
@CalumMuskett



Climber and writer:
Calum Muskett

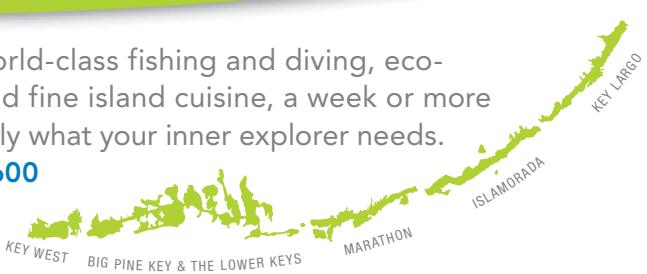


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World firsts:
Ash Dykes

Ash Dykes, 25

■ Who is Ash Dykes?

I take on challenging expeditions in remote locations, testing the boundaries of physical and mental endurance. I learnt how to survive in the jungle with a Burmese hill tribe and cycled the length of Cambodia and Vietnam on £10 bicycles with no gears or suspension. A recent expedition saw me become the first person in the world to walk solo and unsupported across Mongolia, taking on the Altai Mountains, the Gobi Desert and the Mongolian Steppe. I covered 1,500 miles in 78 days.

■ What's your next challenge?

I'm currently traversing the length of Madagascar: 1,800 miles in around four months. If I succeed it will be another world first.

'People say it's a small world, but that's only if you're on the usual track'

■ What does the future hold for the world of adventure and exploration?

More people are getting out there and discovering the world. Some may say this is a bad thing, but I think through travelling we learn and educate, both about the beauty of the world, as well as destruction and devastation.

People say it's a small world, but that's only when you're on the usual track. The world is a big place and there's still lots to explore.

www.ashdykes.com, @Ash_Dykes

NOW WE ARE 20



Molly Thompson Smith, 18

■ Who is Molly Thompson Smith?

I've loved climbing since the first time I tried it when I was seven years old. Eleven years later I'm nearing the end of my junior career after nine years of competing in indoor climbing competitions – from small local bouldering competitions to the world youth championships. I've won the British junior and senior lead climbing championships as well as the British junior bouldering championships. I've won a European lead climbing event, been ranked number one in the world for my age category, qualified for three world championship finals, and made numerous European youth cup finals, getting on to the podium five times.

■ What's your next challenge?

My next challenge is the last senior world cup of the season in Slovenia (mid November) as well as training over the winter ready to compete next year. Hopefully, I'll be able to climb on rock before the season starts again and see if I can gain some more experience there, to transfer to my indoor climbing.

■ What does the future hold for the world of climbing and adventure?

One day indoor climbing could become an Olympic sport, a day that hopefully isn't too far away! Outdoor climbing will continue to push limits with climbers climbing harder and bolder than before. **AT**

@Mollytheclimber, www.mollythompsonsmith.blogspot.co.uk



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ONTARIO
CANADA

GO North

The Canadian province of Ontario is an ideal destination for a wild yet easy to reach adventure – particularly the north. Here's why...

The North is what makes Canada unique among nations. We have something here that no other country has – it offers Canadians a dual existence: to walk city streets and paddle forest rivers. The North provides the world-weary with an antidote to civilization, an antidote no longer available in much of the Western world.” These words were spoken in 1936 about northern Ontario by one of Canada’s most famous personalities, Grey Owl, and they ring just as true nearly 80 years later.

The province of Ontario is the size of France and Spain combined, and it’s an ideal place to escape the grind and have a back-to-nature adventure. Canoeing is the obvious transport of choice – a staggering 33% of the world’s fresh water is in Ontario’s lakes and rivers.

Paddle in the Temagami region, home to Ontario’s longest network of canoe routes, on Canadian Heritage Rivers such as the French and Missinaibi, or canoe in Algonquin Provincial Park, the size of Devon, with 950 miles of canoe routes. Camp under the stars after a day on the water, no people for miles.

If you prefer on-land adventures, Ontario is home to 1,800 hiking trails, like the 500-mile Bruce Trail, Canada’s oldest, longest footpath. And this is accessible adventure. You can be in the wilderness within just a couple of hours of Toronto, Ottawa and Niagara Falls.

Grey Owl is a controversial figure. Using a fabricated Native identity, he made significant contributions as a conservationist, in a time when it was presumed that Canada’s wilderness was simply doomed to disappear. After his death it emerged that he wasn’t Native American at all, and had been brought



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up in Hastings, leaving England for Canada at the age of 17. Despite an initial outcry, it's now acknowledged that without Grey Owl's efforts and passion, Canada might have lost a better part of its natural beauty.

A more recent champion of Ontario, and indeed Grey Owl, is adventurer and survival expert Ray Mears, who's drawn to the region because of the Boreal Forest landscape and the canoeing. "In short, Grey Owl was 100 years ahead of his time," says Ray. "Even today no popular naturalist has been able to enthral an audience while also explaining the

negative impact of human society on wild lands in the way that he did."

Adventures in the province range from half a day out to multi-day guided and unguided trips. With over 280 national and provincial parks, there are endless opportunities. And don't just take our word for it. "Canadian canoe journeys are always special. They have a unique ability to purge the spirit of unwanted static that accumulates in our technological lives," says Ray. **AT**

To find out more about Ray Mears in Ontario and the Grey Owl story, go to www.ontariotravel.net/ukadventure

ONTARIO
CANADA

AIR CANADA 
rouge

 **MOUNTAIN
WAREHOUSE**

READERS EXPOSED

NAME: Sarah Little

AGE: 23

OCCUPATION: Social media manager



Lifelong ambition?

To see as much of the world as I can in the short time we have. Experiencing more than our own little reality helps you appreciate so much more in life.

Person you would most like to meet, and the question you would ask them?

I love to meet people with stories to tell. I can't think of anyone planned – the joy is in surprise meetings.

Ideal travel partner and why? Still looking...! But someone who'll always say yes to my crazy ideas and make me say yes to theirs. I'm a positive person who's a bit of a sponge – if the going is tough I can't deal with complainers! There's always someone who's packed a surprise in their pack for when morale is low, and everyone always loves that person.

Previous outdoor history?

I've been camping all my life and recently did a seven-month solo stint in South East Asia. I was a

Guide as a child but quickly moved over to Scouts as they spent time outside making camps and go carts – much more fun! I ski and snowboard whenever possible too.

Most dangerous moment?

Being held at gunpoint in Laos wasn't great, but tumbling backwards down a deep hole while walking alone in Cappadocia, Turkey, was more dangerous. I seriously wondered if I would get out. Luckily I escaped unscathed besides a twisted ankle.

Most memorable moment?

So many! Paragliding for the first time was incredible. So peaceful. Reaching Croatia after six days of hitch-hiking from England felt great too.

What do you miss most when you are on trail?

My family. There isn't anything material I can't do without, but my family I always miss. It's crazy when people dwell on the random food and 'home comforts' that, at the end of day, mean nothing.

Future travel plans?

The next big plan is to spend three months hitching across the US, spending next to nothing on accommodation/food/anything.

Favourite crap joke?

What cheese can hide a small horse? Mascarpone.

JOIN THE FUN!

Want to be a reader exposed? (who doesn't?). Make yourself known to Rosie (rosie@atmagazine.co.uk). Everyone we feature gets a year's free subscription to Adventure Travel – what a treat!

Ever wondered what sort of awesome people read the world's best outdoor travel magazine?

NAME: Linley Lewis

AGE: 32

OCCUPATION: Co-founder of Ticket to Ride Group @ttridegroup

Lifelong ambition?

London to Cape Town would be amazing. I'd love to cycle it, but taking a 4x4 would be more fun, so I could load it with surf boards and proper camping equipment.

Person you would most like to meet, and the question you would ask them? Captain Cook. His diaries contain the first recording of surfing.

Ideal travel partner and why? I've been all round the world with my business partner Will. I wouldn't have surfed half the waves I've surfed if it wasn't for him. He's always got a plan as well, which sometimes you need!

Previous outdoor history?

At school we did an outward-bound weekend where we got blindfolded and dropped in a wood with a gutted rabbit to share. We then had to run five miles back to school the next day. That was pretty exciting. At 19 I travelled the world with a surfboard under my arm. I have made adventurous travel a big part of my life ever since.

Most dangerous moment?

Chatting to a helicopter pilot in South Africa who told us about two surfers he'd seen on the Point earlier that day with two Great White shadows underneath them. He said they were completely oblivious. I quickly worked out that was me and Will, which was unnerving.

Favourite crap joke?

What did the sushi say to the bee? Wasabi – get it? **AT**



Most memorable moment?

Watching the first group of guys and girls catch a wave in Cape Town on our first Ticket to Ride trip has to be one of my best moments. There had been so much planning, sacrifice and hard work in the build up and at that moment it was all happening, everyone was smiling and happy.

What do you miss when you are on trail? My wife, daughter and son. We go on some great adventures, but they can't come on all my trips.

Future travel plans?

A road trip through the Big Sur in California with the family. We're going to rent a camper van and hit the highway, like the movies.



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A TOP BIRD

Isabella Bird was one of the 19th century's most remarkable female travellers. Roger Bunyan has more...

WHO WAS SHE?

Isabella Bird was an adventure traveller in late Victorian times. She made many incredible journeys, mostly by horseback, despite facing lots of setbacks and difficulties.

EARLY LIFE

Isabella was born in Yorkshire in 1831. As a child she suffered from a number of ailments and needed an operation to remove a tumour from her spine, which was only partly successful. In 1854, when she was 23, doctors recommended that she should travel in order to improve her health, so her father, a clergyman, gave her £100 to go wherever she wished. She visited the United States and Canada, and the trip did appear to improve her physical condition.

FIRST TRAVELS

Isabella's real adventures began years later in 1872, when she went to Hawaii. Here she became the first woman to climb the active volcano of Mauna Loa, and she also learnt to ride horses, sitting astride rather than sidesaddle, as it hurt her back less.

Isabella then sailed to the United States where, alone, she rode from San Francisco to Colorado. In 1873 she rode a total of 800 miles throughout the Rocky Mountains, over all kinds of terrain and in all weathers. She also met a one-eyed outlaw called Rocky Mountain Jim. He greatly admired the independent-minded Isabella; she later wrote that Jim was: 'A man any woman might love but no sane woman would marry.'

On leaving the United States Isabella sailed to Japan, where she lived with members of the Ainu tribe on the northern island of Hokkaido. She then continued by visiting Hong Kong, Canton, Saigon, Singapore and Malaysia.

Whenever Isabella returned to Britain she would write books, articles and give talks about her travels which, in turn, provided funds for future trips. During one visit her sister became ill with typhoid and died. Isabella married Dr John Bishop, who had been looking after her sister; the marriage lasted for five years until his death in 1886.

LATER TRAVELS

During these years back in Britain Isabella's own health had deteriorated too, so she set off on her travels once again. And her journeys got ever more exciting. She went to India, where she helped set up two hospitals

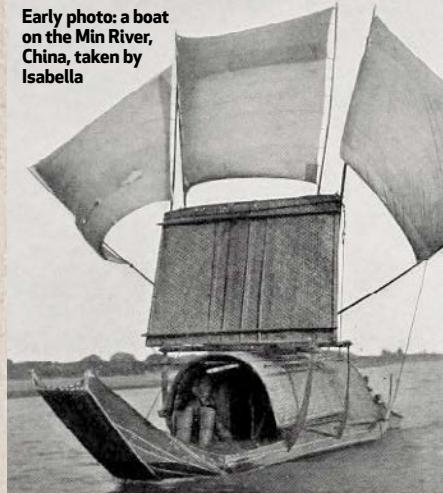


Victorian explorer: Isabella Bird

Incredible journeys: in Persia in the 1890s



Early photo: a boat on the Min River, China, taken by Isabella



in the north of the country. She then travelled to Kashmir, Tibet and, over winter, rode to Tehran, Iran, with a group of British soldiers. The following six months were spent with a caravan travelling across Iran and Kurdistan to Turkey.

Returning again to Britain, Isabella became the first female fellow of the Royal Geographical Society before setting off for China and Korea. She got caught up in the Sino-Japanese War and witnessed the devastation that the conflict caused in Korea. In 1896 she travelled along the Yangtze River by *sampan* (a flat-bottomed wooden boat) and then overland to Sichuan where she was set upon by angry mobs calling her a 'foreign devil.' She returned to Britain via the mountains of Tibet, having produced many striking photos using the new but cumbersome photography equipment of the time.

FINAL JOURNEY

In 1901 and now in her 70s, Isabella travelled to Morocco where she rode 1,000 miles with the Berbers across the desert and in the Atlas Mountains. She used a ladder to mount her black stallion that had been a gift from the Sultan. Although she had led a life of dangerous travel which had seen her suffer from frostbite, cholera, broken bones, malaria, volcanic burns, physical attack and near drownings, she died peacefully in Edinburgh only a few months after her return in 1904.

EXTRAORDINARY TRAVELLER

Isabella Bird was one of the foremost adventure travellers of the late 1800s. Her somewhat unorthodox adventures to little-known locations were extraordinary feats for any traveller of the period, not least for a woman restricted by Victorian convention. Although she suffered ill health for much of her life, she became most alive during her journeys. She documented her adventures in both books and photography, and they have informed, amazed and inspired people through the years.

FIND OUT MORE

Watch the National Library of Scotland film *Travels with Isabella Bird* at www.nls.uk; download the BBC Radio 4 programme *Great Lives – Isabella Bird* (www.bbc.co.uk, or listen online); or read *This Grand Beyond: The Travels of Isabella Bird Bishop* by Cicely Palser Havelay. **AT**

Gear for adventure

Not just for Christmas

With Christmas just around the corner it's reassuring to know that **Ellis Brigham Mountain Sports** have plenty of gift ideas for those who are setting their sights on adventures large and small – here are a few of our favourites...



New GoPro Hero+ £169.99

The Hero+ is the entry-level GoPro for those who want high-quality capture and on-the-go connectivity at a great price.



Sidekick £59.99

This multitool is useful for everything from opening the beers on Christmas day to cutting up the kindling for the fire!



Moji Lantern £19.99

Don't be fooled by its pared down design, the Moji is a bright, light and compact lantern perfect for campsite use.



ThermoBall Hoody From £89.99 (kids)

In the cold and wet winter months, this compressible hoody makes a great insulating layer.



Merrell All Out Blaze GTX £79.99

A waterproof hiking shoe you can rely on; precise fit, stable under foot and comfortable.



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HOT STUFF

Cool new kit we've been using and abusing

CRAZHOPPERS
NOSILIFE HAVANA JACKET
£100

www.craghoppers.com

This is a light, comfy jacket designed for the rigors of travel. It has a whopping nine pockets, so you can easily carry all the paraphernalia that comes with being on the move, like a passport and a camera, and lots of them are secure and discreet to keep important items safe. There's also a small waterproof wallet for keeping valuables dry. The material is Craghoppers' NosiLife, which is permanently insect repellent, and there's a mesh lining to help wick away moisture. The sleeves are adjustable with poppers and the waist via a drawcord. And it's smart enough to wear to the pub too. **BD**



MONTANE
NORTH STAR LITE JACKET
£240

www.montane.co.uk

Great news from Montane – the British company is now using the Responsible Down Standard (RDS) across all of its down products. The RDS is a third-party certified animal welfare and traceability standard to help ensure the humane treatment of ducks and geese used for down, making sure there is no force-feeding, live-plucking or any other mistreatment of animals.

Not only that: all Montane down products now use water resistant down, called HyperDry, meaning it maintains its loft even when wet, and dries faster than untreated down too. Montane has been slower than some companies at adopting water-resistant down; it's great to see the brand using it now.

On to the North Star Lite Jacket itself, this is a new, lightweight jacket that could be used on high mountains or any winter adventures. It's super warm, using 800+ fill power down, and light thanks to the Pertex Quantum Y outer fabric, which combines extreme lightness with durability. This outer fabric is treated with a DWR to keep the water out too.

There's a large fully insulated hood. There are two big main pockets and an inner pocket for valuables. The hem is adjustable to keep the heat in, and the technical cut offers a great range of movement when you're raising your arms above your head, while keeping the rest of the jacket in place. It comes with a stuff sack to pack the jacket in. And in a nice choice of colours, it looks good for wearing down the pub too. **RF**

KEEN
LIBERTY RIDGE
£150

www.keenfootwear.com

As part of its commitment to local manufacturing, American footwear brand Keen is launching a campaign called European Made and has begun making three products in Romania. The new Liberty Ridge boot is one of these; I took



it for some autumnal hiking in the Peak District and it performed well.

The smart leather boot is lined with Keen's waterproof and breathable membrane, called Dry. It was comfortable straight out of the box and supportive, thanks to the integrated heel cushion, the PU midsole and the full-length shank for stability on uneven terrain. The rubber sole gives good grip and there's a tough bumper at the toe. It comes in men's and women's; the men's has two colour options, one of which Keen calls bison/gingerbread (dark brown and rust coloured) which is perhaps one of our favourite ever descriptions of colour. **RF**





VANGO
CORVUS DUO 80 HEAD TORCH

£25

www.vango.com

Vango showed us this headtorch at an outdoor trade show in September and I was impressed. I like that it's got a red light at the back – great for when you end up walking or running down a road in bad light, which often happens to me on short, winter days. The back light has a flashing mode as well as constant, and the main front torch can be set to high, low or flashing. It's 80 lumens, which isn't the brightest, but will definitely do the job for camping, and it has a waterproof casing. Each torch takes two AAA batteries, so nice and easy when they need replacing. The headband has anti-slide strips but it isn't that comfy, and although it's adjustable it might be a bit big for anyone with a smaller head. But still, a nice headtorch at a good price. **RF**

**WINTER
Lighting**

MAN O'LEISURE
BUBEL TOWEL
£39.99

www.manoleisure.com

The thing with travel towels is that, more often than not, they're too small and horrible to use. While they may dry quickly and have anti-odour qualities, when I come out of the shower at a hostel the last thing I want to do is strut around with a sheet of material barely covering my dignity. And that's where Man O'Leisure comes in. The Bubel towel, which is a massive 180cm by 95cm, dwarfs most conventional travel towels and packs down surprisingly small (I managed to get mine down to no larger than an A5 book) while weighing just 360g. Made from a mix of polyamide and polyester, it has great moisture absorbing properties while also being quick drying. A treatment called Sanitized Actifresh prevents odours and bacteria from lingering and, as the towel is available in a

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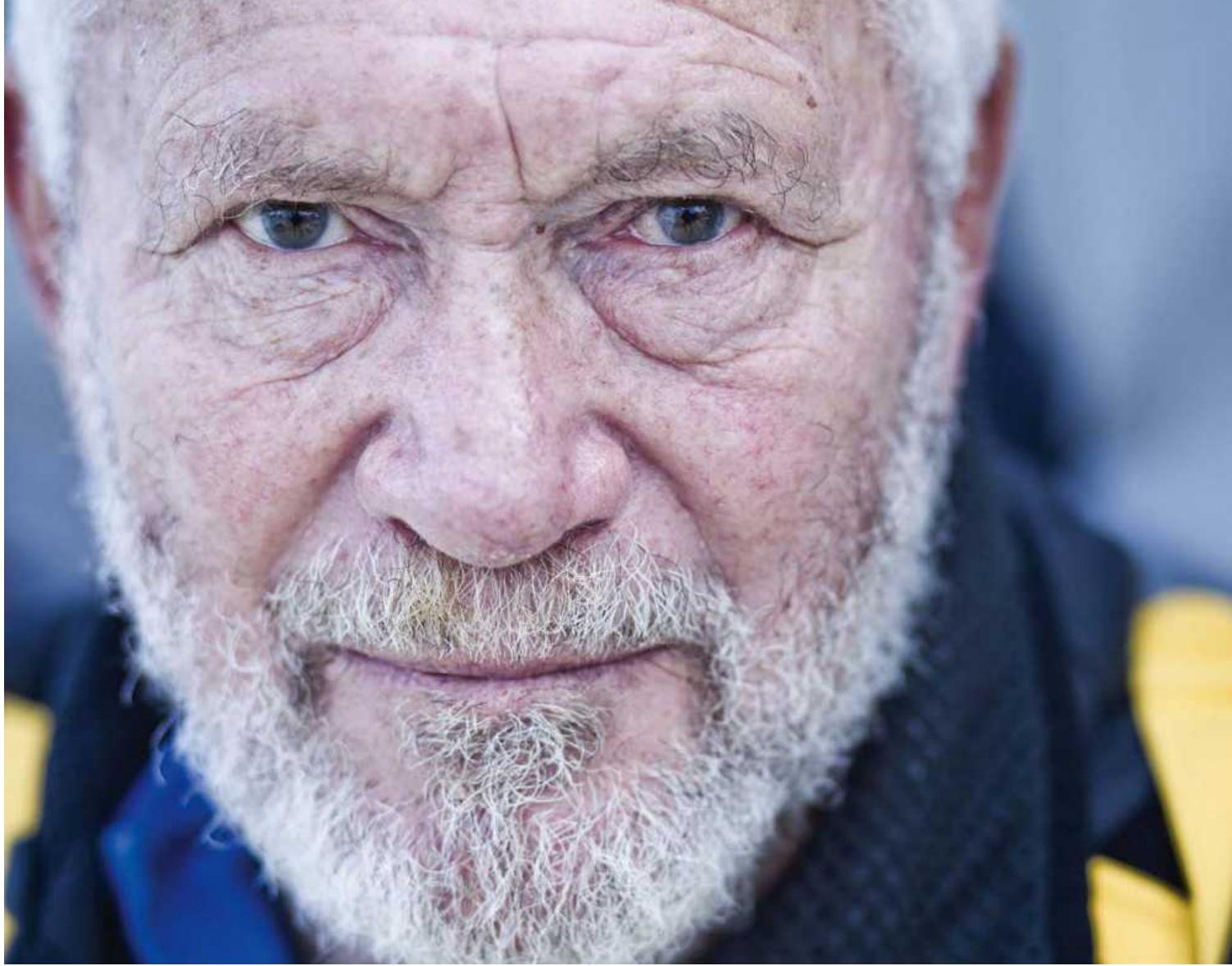


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MEINDL



Robin Knox-Johnston

Sir Robin Knox-Johnston, 76, became the first person to sail single-handed, non-stop around the world in 1969, and the oldest person to do it in 2006 (aged 67). He's also founder of the Clipper Round the World Yacht Race, the world's longest ocean adventure, uniquely for non-professional sailors. We find out more...

My mother's side of the family were sailors, but I never met them. I got into sailing when I joined the Merchant Navy. We had to learn to sail lifeboats and I was lucky enough to be on a ship where they took the crew off and manned it with cadets. We had a whaler and two dinghies to play with.

I was based out in India at the end of my contract, so I decided to build a yacht and sail home. I sailed back to England via the Cape of Good Hope. When I got back I heard about Chichester going round the world with one stop and thought, 'that's one thing left to be done.'

Being alone at sea for long periods of time doesn't bother me. I'm quite content. I just get on with looking after the boat

mostly. I love the sheer joy of the boat going fast, the sparkling sea, the fluffy-white cotton-wool clouds and the trade winds. I could sit there and lap it up for hours.

You learn your weaknesses rather than your strengths on long voyages. You've got to push yourself. You know that you can't leave things; you're constantly alert to everything about you on the boat. If you don't do that you're not successful.

There's no reason age should be a barrier to adventure. Absolutely not. Physically it's harder as you get older, but the mental side stays the same. My racing boat is getting a bit heavy for me now. I need something smaller I can sail more effectively, which would be more satisfying because I know I'd be more competitive in it. You just adjust as you go along.



Robin Knox-Johnston:
"I love the sheer joy of
the boat going fast"

I was climbing an unclimbed peak in Greenland with Chris Bonington when I had the idea of the Clipper Round the World Yacht Race. We were camping on glaciers, pulling everything in sledges, and Chris was talking about how much it costs to climb Mount Everest. It sounded a lot so I thought, what's the sailing equivalent? For someone who's never sailed around the world, who'd love to do it but hasn't got enough money to buy a boat, or enough confidence in themselves? I worked out it was about half the cost of climbing Everest, so I put an advert in the paper and got 8,000 answers.

The BBC has this idea that sailing is an elitist sport, but that's so wrong. The sport crosses all boundaries. If you want a good crew, you don't care who Daddy is – you just want a good bloke up there. I was on a racing boat with a brick-layer's apprentice. He was damn good, and that's all we were interested in.

Women are equally as good as men, but they do it differently because they're normally physically not as strong. They think their way round it. If you want a generalisation I would say women are better light weather helmsmen than men, because they focus. Men will start talking about the football results and get distracted. Britain has got some very, very good, probably even a monopoly, of single-handed round the world female sailors. People like Dee Caffari and Ellen MacArthur – if you're up against them in a single-handed race you do not underestimate them.

'The BBC has this idea that sailing is an elitist sport, but that's so wrong. It crosses all boundaries'

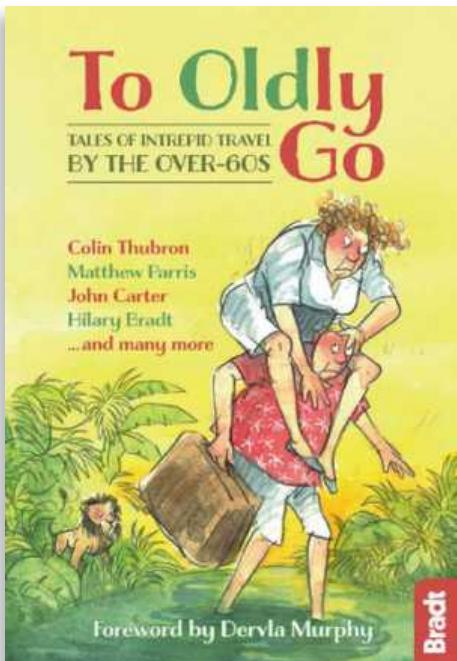
One cure for seasickness is to drink a pint of seawater. You will bring it up again. But it might counter the acid in your stomach... or at least that's a theory. I think it's more likely that people think, 'I'm going to have to stop being seasick because I don't want to drink another pint of that!' I've only ever had seasickness once, and that was my first trip to sea.

Each leg of the Clipper race has a different character. The first leg is fascinating because of the Doldrums. The next one's more straightforward; the one after that is pure Southern Ocean, with huge waves. Leg four brings in the Sydney-Hobart Race, which is great fun for the crews. Next it's Queensland, Da Nang in Vietnam and China – fascinating places to visit. And then you've got the really big one, all the way from China to North America, 5,500 miles in the North Pacific, which is as bad as the Southern Ocean, so it's a toughie. The penultimate leg goes through the Panama Canal – a fantastic experience.

Watching people who haven't sailed before develop into really good, safe sailors probably gives more satisfaction than anything I can think of. **AT**

BRILL BOOKS

Latest books from the world of outdoor travel



TO OLDLY GO

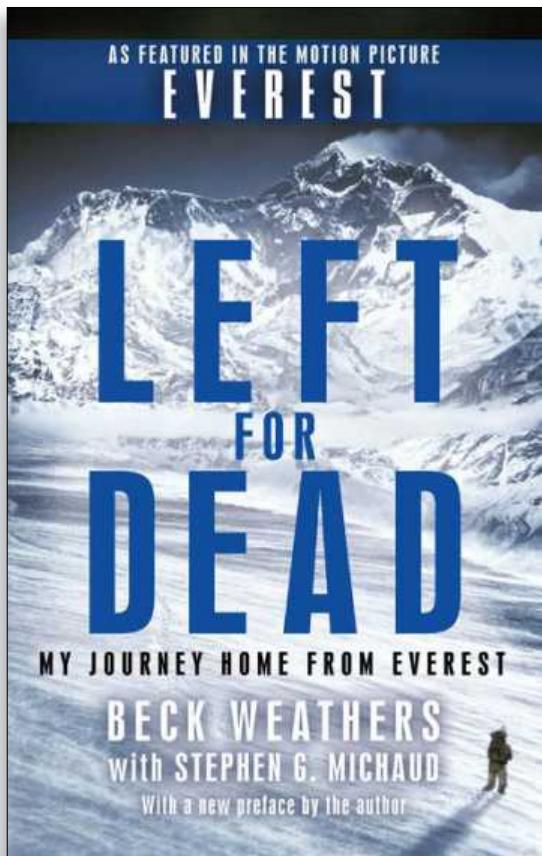
Various contributors
£10.99

At the start of this edition of AT we met some bright young adventurers but, just in case we were in any doubt, this lovely little book proves that the old folk are at it too. With the subtitle 'Tales of Intrepid Travel by the Over 60s,' it's a collection of travel and adventure stories by those in their Third Age, including Hilary Bradt, founder of Bradt Travel Guides, and *The Times* journalist Matthew Parris. It's a great book to dip in and out of: I read about stroke survivor Anne Sigmon defying doctor's orders to travel to South India, where her condition made the trip even better; of Hazel Pennington wowing youngsters on a via ferrata aged 63, and of Roger Bray injuring unpronounceable body parts (in German) while skiing. Entertaining and inspiring. **RF**
www.bradtguides.com

SPECIAL OFFER!

Bradt Travel Guides is offering readers of *Adventure Travel* a 30% discount on *To Oldly Go*, making it just £7.70. Visit www.bradtguides.com and enter the code ATM at the checkout. Offer valid until 30 November.

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LEFT FOR DEAD

Beck Weathers with Stephen G Michaud
£7.99

Left for Dead is a strange book. It's the story of Texan Beck Weathers, one of the climbers on Everest during the 1996 disaster, when nine people died. As the title of the book suggests, Beck was left for dead – actually twice – in treacherous conditions near the summit, but somehow survived.

Left for Dead is told from both Beck's perspective and with input from his family and friends. The first part of the book describes his experiences on Everest, and it's gripping. What stands out is the description of Beck stumbling into High Camp after being announced as dead, with a frostbitten black face and his right arm bare and frozen above his head. I was also moved by his wife Peach's comment that she understood that it was presumed there was no chance he could survive, but that she didn't understand why he was left in a tent to die alone. And it's amazing too how she arranges her husband's rescue from back home in Texas: while all climbers then recognised that helicopter rescue from Camp Two was impossible due to the altitude, she had no idea, so she went ahead and managed to find one.

But the book then goes downhill. We are taken to Beck's life before and after Everest, to learn how climbing saved him from depression but nearly cost him his marriage, and how it took the Everest disaster to bring him back into the lives of his wife and children. Interesting subjects in theory, but poorly executed, going back through old family trees and school experiences that are irrelevant and uninteresting. A description of Beck's ascent of both Mount Vinson in Antarctica and the Carstensz Pyramid in Indonesia are highlights, and the death of a family member is moving, but the rest of it is hard work. A shame, as the first half of the book is a great read. **RF**

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the best outdoor events

■ ANDY KIRKPATRICK – COLD MOUNTAIN

Often described as *Touching the Void* meets Peter Kay, in his latest tour Andy will talk about being assigned to guide a group of BASE jumpers up one of the 'hardest mountains in the world' in Antarctica. Promises to be gripping, funny and brutally honest, with plenty of X-rated language.

When 'n' where: Around the UK until February.
How: Tickets cost about £15, see www.andykirkpatrick.com for dates and venues.

■ STEVE BACKSHALL – WILD WORLD TOUR

Steve is best known for his TV series *Deadly 60* on CBBC, but this tour will have something for kids and grown ups, with tales from the world's wildest places meeting some of its most bizarre creatures.

When 'n' where: Around the UK until the middle of November.

How: Tickets cost about £19.50; see www.stevebackshall.com for dates and venues.

■ EUROPEAN OUTDOOR FILM TOUR

A two-hour programme of jaw-dropping adventure films, including *Tamara*, about 28-year-old mountaineer Tamara Lunger's oxygen-free attempt of K2; *1H 46Min*, about the alpinist Dani Arnold, who's after Ueli Steck's speed records; and *Unreal*, described as the mountain biking film of the year.

When 'n' where: Big cities in England and Scotland until 12 November.
How: Tickets cost £12, see www.eoft.eu.

■ FREEZE BIG AIR

Said to be Britain's biggest ever snow-sports and music event, with top snowboarders and skiers taking on a 120m by 41m snow jump, plus live music, alpine food and a cracking après ski party.

When 'n' where: Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London, 14 November.

How: Tickets cost from £39.99, see www.freezebigair.com.

■ KENDAL MOUNTAIN FESTIVAL

It's the biggest date in the outdoorsy calendar. Adventurers featuring in the line-up include Sean Conway, who has swum, run and cycled the length of Britain, and record-breaking distance runner Nicky Spinks. Top climbers include Ben Moon, and Tommy Caldwell, who catapulted to fame last year by free-climbing Dawn Wall on El Capitan in Yosemite. There will be stacks of films, starring everyone from top climbers like Leo Houlding to new releases from around the world. Together with art exhibitions, literature lectures, the Rab party and the Boardman Tasker literary prize, it looks like another not-to-be-missed event.

When 'n' where: Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal (and various other locations in the town); 19-22 November.

How: Prices vary depending on what you want to go and see, but day-long film passes cost about £30. For more, see www.mountainfest.co.uk. 



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To be in with a chance of winning a Men's or Women's Wrightbridge 3-in-1 jacket all of your own, all you have to do is send an email to vicki@atmagazine.co.uk with the subject heading 'Regatta Wrightbridge Competition' and your full name and location.

Regatta Great Outdoors would love to keep you at the forefront when it comes to any offers and new product releases, though if you do not wish to receive this information, please state in your email entry. Prize may vary dependant on stock. Closing date 30/11/2015

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Gift guide



AT's guide to this year's best outdoorsy Christmas presents...

Never know what to put on your Christmas list? Never know what to get the adventurer in your life? We're here for you. The next four pages are packed full of cracking gifts with an outdoorsy or adventurous theme, from

socks to stoves and books to binoculars. The only thing you'll have to worry about now is too much choice... and how much longer you have to spend chatting to those dull relatives before getting out on the next adventure...



Super socks

Perilla | £18

www.perilla.co.uk

Luxury alpaca walking socks from Perilla.

Perfect for walkers, climbers, skiers and cyclists. There are seven ranges in a great palette of colours to include sedge green and mulberry to brighter hues of purple and burnt orange. All toe seams are hand linked to give a flat comfortable finish over the toes.

Alpaca fibre has higher insulating properties than any other fibre, is as soft as cashmere to wear but incredibly hardwearing; it naturally wicks away moisture, repels odour and bacteria so socks can be worn for a week and stay soft and fresh without the necessity to wash them – long life socks!

Gift box options are available.



CL Companion 8x30 Binocular

Swarovski Optik | £850

www.swarovskioptik.com

The CL COMPANION 8X30 BINOCULAR from SWAROVSKI OPTIK has excellent optics and impressive viewing comfort, with a compact, lightweight design, and is watertight. Have you ever wanted to marvel, in glorious close up, at the splendour of the penguins splashing around in Antarctica, or feel so close to the leopard on your safari of a lifetime that you can almost count her spots? With the CL Companion binocular this can be a reality. If you enjoy hiking, the CL Companion is so easy to carry around, absolutely ideal for spotting hidden wildlife. Travel with Swarovski Optik and don't miss a thing.

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The built-in micro USB tip will give you tangle-free charging for smartphones and tablets. The certified cables provide efficient charging with no extra cables to lose. Charge the unit up quickly via USB in just four hours or be solar ready and charge from a Nomad 7 panel in nine hours.

Not only is the Venture 30 rugged and durable but it is also waterproof in use. Dunk it, spray it, use it in the rain – power that handles whatever Mother Nature can throw at you. No rubber plugs needed.

The compact unit packs a punch with 30Wh, 7,800mAh meaning you can power smartphones two to three times over and give tablets one full charge and more. It's compact, lightweight and packable from the airport to the trail.

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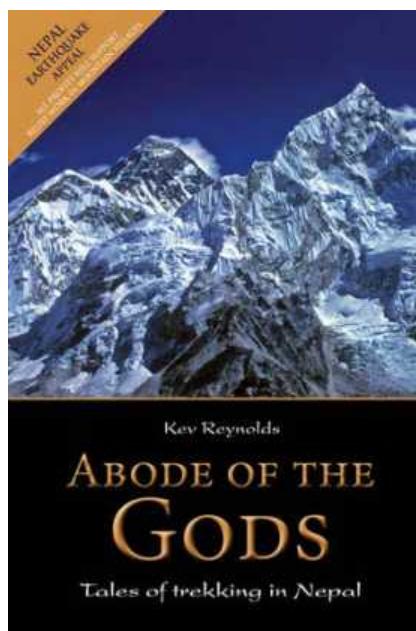
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The Jetboil MiniMo personal cooking system is a high performance Jetboil system that allows for easier cooking and eating. The unique design means improved control and usability for you, as well as increased performance from the stove. Jetboil have kept all of our favourite signature features like the convenient push button igniter, the FluxRing® heat exchanger and the insulating cozy. However the MiniMo presents new qualities unique to this stove which make it an easy to use cooking experience.



- ◆ The MiniMo delivers the finest simmer control of any upright canister stove on the market. Thanks to proprietary regulator technology, the stove ensures consistent performance right down to -6°C making it good even for cold temperatures.
- ◆ The cleverly designed 1 litre cup with optimized height provides users with an easy-to-eat experience due to the lower spoon angle. The newly designed 1 litre cup is slightly wider but much shorter, making it easy to eat directly from.
- ◆ Like most of the other Jetboil stoves, the lid is integrated with a pour spout and strainer, but also has a drinking spout. Cook then drink straight from your Jetboil!
- ◆ The burner unit (6000 BTU) produces a fast boil time of 2m 15s per 0.5l.
- ◆ The new folding metal handles provide a solid grip on the cup while cooking and eating. We love the fact that Jetboil have thought of everything in this one compact stove. Useful features like making the bottom cover double up as a measuring cup, but also when it comes to packing up your personal cooking system and fitting everything inside the cooking cup for easy storage, all for just £135.

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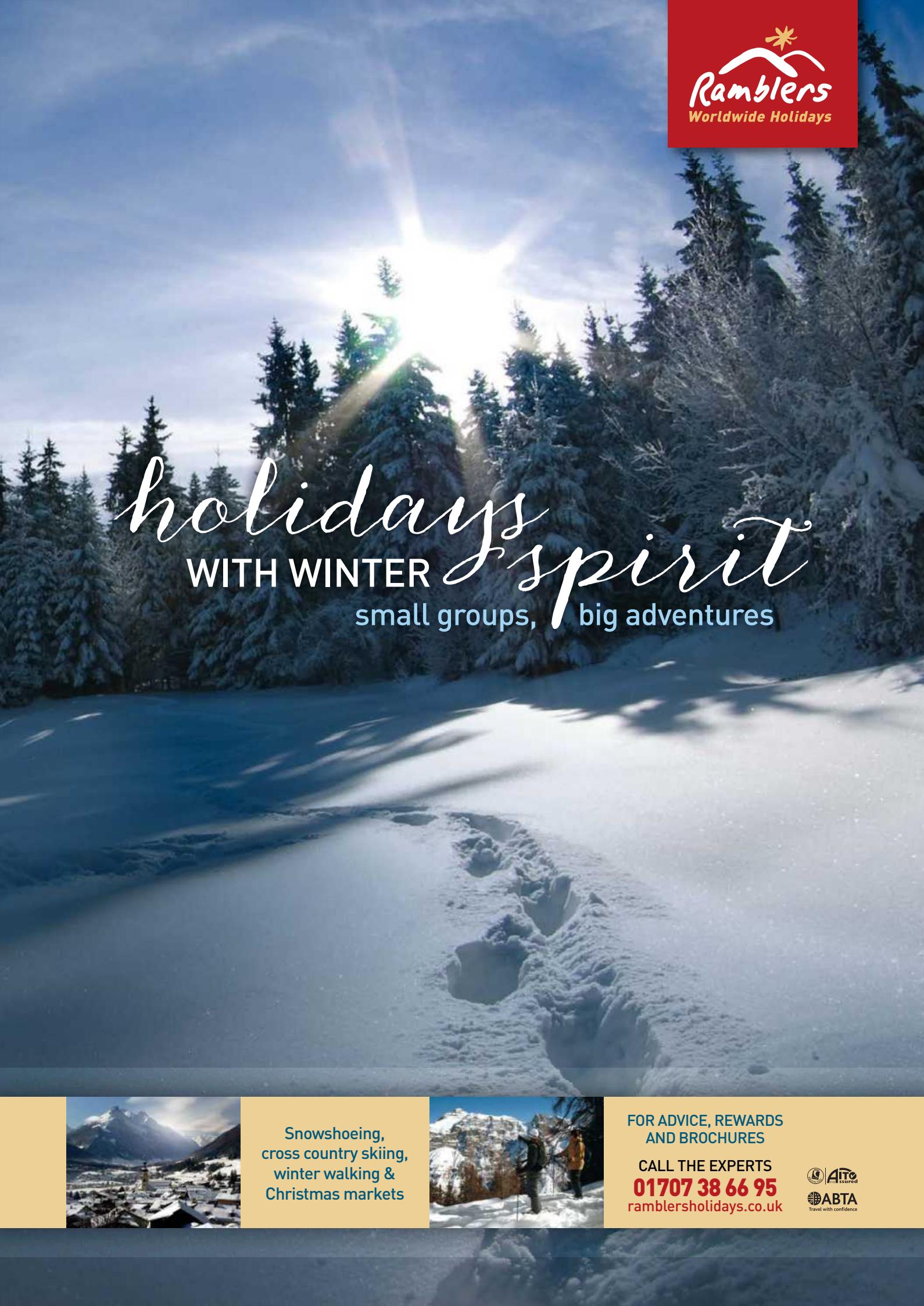
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James Bond skiing

'Would a thrill-seeking Bond ski in Sölden out of choice? I made it my mission to find out'

**Winter skills, Scotland**

'I had worried that a winter skills course would be all hard work and misery, so it's a pleasant surprise'

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'The biggest draw is the so-called longest run in Europe: la Sarenne, a 16km black'

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Skiing – 007 style



Sölden in Austria is where the snowy scenes for the latest 007 film *Spectre* were filmed. AT's Bond girl Lucy Grewcock investigates



If James Bond were to visit Sölden, he'd stay at the Hotel Bergland. In fact he did just that. Well, sort of: Daniel Craig and his film crew checked in last January to film mountain scenes for *Spectre* – the latest Bond film.

Stepping into the lobby after a 70-minute transfer from Innsbruck, I half expected to see Bond swigging a martini by the slate-finished fireplace or catching up with Q at the Apple Mac computer bar. The hotel is a step-up from the basic apartments I usually stay in for ski breaks.

But Sölden wasn't chosen as a film location because of the Bergland – it's what rises above the hotel that's the showstopper. Set in the Austrian state of Tirol, the scenery is dramatic, with two glittering glaciers and Austria's second highest peak (the 3,768m Wildspitze) soaring above the valley town.

Sölden expects a flurry of 007 fans

this ski season, who will no doubt be reeling off Bond one-liners in the bars. But, a resort that's often overlooked by British skiers, I was more interested in the skiing itself. Would a thrill-seeking Bond ski in Sölden out of choice? I made it my mission to find out.

After an Austrian breakfast of cold meats and sweet pastries, I stepped out of the Gaislachkogl gondola at 3,048m, where the glass walls of the Ice-Q restaurant were glinting in the morning sun. Rumoured to feature in the film, I couldn't resist taking a peak inside. With 360-degree mountain views and rows of expensive spirits behind the bar it's certainly the place for something shaken not stirred, but after glancing at the price list, I settled for an espresso.

Back outside, I carved my first turns on a long red that swept me towards the central ski area. There are more than 140km of piste, with a particularly good network of blues on the high-altitude ►



'Our skis barely touched the pistes, except to access the lifts and ski to a rustic hut for lunch'



glaciers to the west, and the best choice of reds and blacks further east.

Sölden offers two lift-pass extensions. The self-guided Big Three circuit takes you on a safari of the resort's highest points, with photo-stations to record your day. And the Adrenaline Pass digitally records your times in 10 mountain disciplines, including slalom and speed racing.

These sounded fun but I was more eager to spend my second day off-piste. "It's really accessible here," a local enthused on a chairlift. "You can find some fantastic routes with no need to hike." This sounded ideal, so I booked a guide that evening and, to my delight, it snowed overnight.

Gliding off the first lift of the day, I followed ski guide Karl as he ducked under a rope, stopping at the top of an untouched face. "I'll go first and wait down there." He pointed with his ski pole to where the cliffs petered out and the face opened up.

Following him, I swung my way through my first few turns before gaining momentum and finding my flow. "Nice, huh?" Karl said, as I jerked to a stop beside him. "Brilliant," I beamed, glancing up at my haphazard tracks next to his perfect zigzags.

As we set off again, thick cloud swept in, veiling the cliffs, contours and everything else around us in white fog. "We wait," Karl said, explaining how the mists can sometimes move in fast and hang in the dips.

Five minutes later we had blue skies and I was following Karl as he sashayed round boulders down powdery slopes, before popping back on to the piste and sliding straight on to a chairlift.

We explored the backcountry all day, bounding over wide bowls, edging down steep chutes and rollercoastering along tiny trails that wiggled through the woods. Our skis barely touched the pistes, except to access the lifts and to ski to a rustic hut for a lunch of clear dumpling soup and shredded pancakes.

By late afternoon I was exhausted, so Karl insisted on celebrating our ski day the Austrian way, with schnapps in a mountain hut. Several shots later, I wobbled my way back to the Bergland and headed to the rooftop spa to sober up on the outdoor 'bubble-bed.'

"This is the life," I sighed. Certainly good enough for Bond, I think it's time the rest of us Brits turned our attention to Sölden.



**Licence to thrill:
off-piste in Sölden**

Need more info?



Getting there

The most convenient airport is Innsbruck, with flights from several UK airports. Transfers can be arranged at www.transfer.tirol.at and start at around €100 (£70).



Staying there

Sölden has accommodation for all budgets. I stayed at the four-star Bergland Hotel (www.bergland-soelden.at), where prices start at €158 half board per person per night. For quieter nightlife and ski in/out accommodation, stay in the Hochsölden area, which sits at 2,090m, just above Sölden. Try Haus Maria (www.simone-maria.at), where rooms start at €30.



Ski hire and guides

I rented kit at Sport Glanzer (www.glanzer.at) and arranged a guide through Skischule Sölden (www.skischule-soelden.com).



Where to eat

On the mountain, Gampe Thaya on ski run 11 is a great place for lunch. Ice-Q is good for a treat,

and Stabele Schirmbar is a casual spot for burgers and beers. In town, there's plenty of choice, including Restaurant First, steakhouse Joe's Höhle and the Bergland.



Apres ski

Sölden has around 85 bars, restaurants and clubs. Drinking starts in slope-side bars mid-afternoon and continues all night in town. Right on the slopes, Philipp Sölden has been a popular après bar for more than 30 years. In town, there's everything from rustic drinking holes to DJs. For a guide to the party scene, visit www.apresskisoelden.at.



Other activities

Check out Sölden's Nordic ski tracks and 5km toboggan run, book in an afternoon of paragliding or spend an evening on the ice-rink. There's also the Aqua Dome thermal spa, and the Freizeit sports arena has everything from an indoor pool and wellness suite to a fitness centre and tennis hall.



More info

For more see www.soelden.com and www.visittirol.co.uk.



Winter skills

Walking in crampons, digging shelters and lots of sliding in the snow – Rosie Fuller recommends a winter skills course in Scotland



"This is the grand finale," says mountain guide Paul Lewis. We're learning how to ice axe arrest, the method of stopping yourself using an ice axe if you slip down a snowy or icy slope. We've covered how to apply the technique in various scenarios, depending on whether we were to fall feet first, head first on our back or head first on our front, and the finale will involve him handing us an axe halfway down the 'cliff' (actually a gentle slope) to see how we react under pressure. Yikes.

Attempt one doesn't quite go to plan. Paddy is the first member of the group to try. He opts for the head-first backwards approach, a brave decision. Pushing off from the top, he misses the ice axe and slides all the way to the bottom with nothing to help him stop. It's hilarious. Both Paddy and Paul refuse responsibility. Our later attempts are more successful, including

Paddy's, and although we're learning an important skill, we're also having ridiculous fun – I don't think the joy of sliding around on snow ever disappears.

I'm on a winter skills course in the mountains around Fort William with the company Peak Mountaineering. It's a three-day course aiming to equip people with the knowledge they need to go out walking in winter conditions. The course covers kit; how to choose a safe route based on the weather and avalanche conditions; building snow shelters and much more.

I had worried that a winter skills course would be all hard work and misery, envisioning cold weather, early starts and endless digging in the snow. So it's a pleasant surprise that our first day starts by taking a cable car up to the snow at the Nevis Range ski area.

"It's not SAS selection – three days of walking in snow will be tough, so we're going to take it slow and steady," says Paul. Phew. ▶



'Although we're learning a skill, we're also having fun – I don't think the joy of sliding around on snow ever disappears'



We put on crampons and move away from the skiers to a snowy hillside where we begin to learn about what can cause avalanches. Paul explains that the three main points to be aware of are the terrain, the snowpack and the weather. We study different layers in the snow and learn that it's important to know what conditions have been like in the days and weeks leading up to a day out on the hill, not just the day itself. And as well as the three key points there's always a trigger which, 90% of the time, is people.

Next we find a spot to attempt the infamous ice axe arrests, with Paul giving us tips on navigation and how to walk in crampons on the way. The day finishes with snow shelter building: we learn a simple 'unplanned' shelter called a snow grave, which would help you survive in an emergency, and as a group we build a 'shovel up.' The effort keeps us warm, and the result is an impressive igloo-like shelter that all six of us can squeeze in to.

On the second day we travel slightly south from Fort William to the Glencoe area. After walking up a path called the Devil's Staircase (it isn't as punishing as it sounds), we build upon the skills we learnt yesterday, tackling steeper terrain in the crampons. We also learn how to make belays in the snow, and have fun trying the South African abseil – a method of abseiling without needing a harness.

Day three is the test – can we use our new skills to plan our own safe route in winter? The forecast is horrible, warning of rain that's 'rarely ceasing' and cloud that will 'never clear,' and before the course I would only have considered a low-level walk, if not going straight to the pub. But studying the map, the weather and the avalanche reports, we realise that there are safe, sheltered routes we can do, while still managing to find some snow to play in.

Heading back to Glencoe we walk up a sheltered valley to a peak called Gearr Aonach, which is below the riskier areas indicated on the avalanche forecast, stopping on the way to make group decisions about whether it's safe to continue and when to put on crampons. It's rewarding and, based on everything we've learnt, less of a dark art than I'd imagined. I'm relieved we didn't go straight to the pub (the beer afterwards was worth the wait), and can't wait to plan my own winter day out. **AT**



Get digging: snow-shelter building in Scotland

Need more info?



The course

I was on Peak Mountaineering's Winter Hill Skills three-day course, which aims to give you a toolbox of key winter skills on the first two days, putting them into practice on the third 'mountain journey' day. It costs £285 (not including accommodation) and runs throughout February and March. See www.peakmountaineering.com. You can do a two-day version of the course too, although I found it really useful to see how everything came together on the third day.



How to get there

For 2016 Peak Mountaineering is moving its winter courses to Aviemore in the Cairngorms. By car Aviemore is about 2.5 hours north of Glasgow. You also can travel by bus, train (including the sleeper train from London Euston, www.sleeper.scot), or even plane to Inverness, which is about a 45-minutes drive away.



What to take

There's a comprehensive list on the Peak Mountaineering website but it includes lots

of warm and waterproof clothing; a 45 to 50-litre rucksack; ski goggles; gaiters; lunch and snacks. You'll also need crampons, an ice axe and a helmet, which Peak Mountaineering can loan, and crampon-compatible boots. If you don't have these, Peak Mountaineering can organise rental for a discounted price.



Fitness

The course wasn't as gruelling as I'd feared, taking it steady with plenty of time for instruction. It still involves walking uphill carrying heavier packs than in summer, but if you're used to summer hillwalking, you will be fine.



Win! Two places on a winter skills course!

Peak Mountaineering is offering two places on a winter skills course, worth up to **£570**, to a lucky reader who can answer the question: *Where are Peak Mountaineering's 2016 winter skills courses taking place?* Email your answer to info@peakmountaineering.com. The winner will be drawn at random, and can choose from any of the company's two- or three-day winter skills courses (subject to availability). Enter by 31 December 2015.



Ski Slovakia

New cheap flights have opened up Slovakia's Jasna resort as a great destination for a short ski break, says **Colin Nicholson**



A common problem with visiting an area famed for its off-piste is knowing where to begin. Dare you duck under that rope without being sure where it leads? By contrast, I had just arrived in Slovakia's principal resort of Jasna, which is the latest affordable short-break destination thanks to a new flight with Wizz Air and transfer times under an hour. And straight away I picked up a free, 44-page guidebook (in English) to all its 12 freeride zones.

Many British skiers assume that skiing in Eastern Europe is for beginners and intermediates only. But having been tested by the resort's convex black slopes as well as the off-piste, I can assure them they are wrong.

There are less daunting runs too, and after one of the exhilarating, uninterrupted drops from Mount Chopok, at above 2,000m, down to one the villages below 1,000m, my

brother-in-law and I relaxed in one of many modern glass rotunda cafes. All of these have free wi-fi, so we could post pictures to stoke the envy of Facebook friends. The high-tech feel is a result of a €200 million, six-year investment programme in Tatry Mountain Resorts' three ski areas.

At least one thing in Slovakia harks back to the Communist days – the prices. We were sipping arty cappuccinos that cost under €3, while a pint costs even less. Even at our slopeside hotel, the Grand, the excellent Slovak wines cost less than €2 a glass.

The next morning it was time to explore further, so we took our first off-piste dabble, starting above the treeline. One of the excitements of freeride is the uncertainty of what lies under your feet. So we clattered over icy, wind-blown crust, before sinking into soft, heavy powder, then finding the perfect formula between the trees.

Jasna has slopes on both sides of ➤



'At least one thing in Slovakia harks back to the Communist days – the prices'



the summit, often with remarkably different climates. It was overcast to the north, so we were drawn to the swathes of yellow on the map of the south side, indicating the most accessible freeride zones, with a hope of sunshine to match. Alas, we dived from the summit into a pea-souper so thick we could only inch forward to the lift that would take us back again. We celebrated our escape by going for the most expensive thing on the menu at the Shi Shi restaurant on the summit – duck breast, for which we paid less than €11.

The following morning we ventured in glorious sunshine to the south side again. Off one run, the powder was piled high between evenly spaced trees, promising an epic descent. We were so busy bouncing through the powder and calling to each other when we found a particularly nice spot, that we hadn't realised we were losing altitude – fast. We could still head across to the base station, but our way was barred by a babbling brook.

There was only one thing to do. We would have to jump it, which, hearts-in-mouths, we did. And then, with a bit of huffing, we made it back.

Jasna is one of three resorts in the area. Just 15 minutes from tiny, pristine Poprad airport is Lomnica. Here you can take a cable car up to the observatory for impressive views over the Polish border. And it has freeride routes either side of the main flow of 18km of pistes and nine lifts. But disappointingly these end at a car park. The charming town, with its half-timbered houses and the gobsmacking, turn-of-the-century Grand Hotel Praha, are a short bus ride away. A giant storm in 2004 felled half the trees, which only adds to the barren feel of the slopes.

Seemingly less affected was the third area, Strbske Pleso. Although it has just six lifts, its 9km of slopes curve around the wooded hillside nicely. And it has more the village feel of a resort, with a market and carriage rides on offer.

Sitting on a high plateau, it also offers cross-country skiers 25km of trails on guaranteed snow, even when the plain far below us was bare in late March. And with the airport just half an hour away I could get a spin in after breakfast... before descending to catch my budget flight back to Luton. **AT**

Colin Nicholson is editor of Ski+board, the magazine of the Ski Club of Great Britain.



Latest destination:
Slovakian off-piste

Need more info?



Get there

Wizz Air (www.wizzair.com) runs four flights a week to Poprad, Slovakia, from Luton. The flight takes two and a half hours but it's the transfers that will get weekend warriors excited. Tatranska Lomnica and Strbske Pleso are half an hour from the airport, while Jasna is an hour away.



Stay there

The websites for Jasna (www.jasna.sk) and the High Tatras (www.vt.sk) offer accommodation. It is good value by UK standards, so if you want to splash out try Jasna's ski-in, ski-out Grand (www.grandjasna.sk), the Praha (www.ghpraha.sk) in Lomnica, and the Kempinski (www.kempinski.com) in Strbske Pleso, where you can ski across the lake to the cross-country area. All have fantastic spas.



Package deals

Two British operators offer ski packages: Mountain Paradise (www.mountainparadise.co.uk) and Propaganda Ski (www.propagandaski.co.uk), which runs a chalet in Jasna.



Other activities

The Night SkiAlp introduction to ski touring costs €28. Snowmobiling tours in Strbske Pleso cost €20 for 10 minutes; horse-drawn carriage rides from the Kempinski also cost €20. Cross country ski and boot hire in Strbske Pleso costs €17 a day.

A candlelit dinner at the historic Von Roll cable car station, including a snowcat ride up to the restaurant, where you can see the entrails of the old machinery overhead while eating a five-course meal, costs €39 (not including wine).

Away from the slopes, if you fancy skydiving but are terrified of heights, go to the Hurricane Factory where you can experience weightlessness in the wind tunnel (www.hurricanefactory.com). And you may want to unwind afterwards at the neighbouring Aquacity (www.aquacityresort.com). For a little extra you can have fish nibble the hard skin on your feet from all that skiing.



More info

For more on the region around Jasna see www.visitliptov.sk, and for more on the High Tatras resorts see www.regiontatra.sk.



Telemarking heroes

Rosie Fuller attempts telemark skiing and tries the longest run in Europe in the French resort of Alpe d'Huez



“Telemarking isn’t easy. If it was, it would be called snowboarding,” says instructor Philippe.

Brilliant. Everyone loves a cheap dig at snowboarders, especially from a French ski guide, but underneath, I’m nervous.

Fairly advanced skiers looking for a new challenge, three friends and I have booked a telemark lesson at the French resort of Alpe d'Huez. We've swapped our regular kit for telemark skis and boots, which join together via a binding at the back and a worryingly flimsy wire at the front, and take photos of ourselves in ridiculous lunge positions as Phillippe begins to explain what to do.

“When traversing ze slope, ze downhill ski should be forward,” he says. “To turn, stand up and perform a scissor movement with ze legs.” A textbook example of the expression ‘easier said than done.’

We make our way down green and blue runs, which seem a lot more daunting with a new system attached to my feet. I also remember how scary it feels to be a beginner, flailing around in the middle of the slope with everyone whizzing past. But we don't fall over anything like as much as I'd expected as, if you can already ski, you can save most disasters by reverting to a snowplough and starting again.

By the end of the two-hour taster session I'm managing to make my way slowly down a red run. I don't feel as graceful as real telemark skiers you see on the slopes, and video footage confirms that I don't look anything like them either. But I love the challenge of trying something new.

Under an hour's drive from the French city of Grenoble, Alpe d'Huez is extremely accessible. The resort is made up of the town of Alpe d'Huez itself and then several smaller villages, including Vaujany, where we're staying. Vaujany ➤



‘To turn, stand up and perform a scissor movement with the legs,’ Phillippe says. Easier said than done’



isn't the best destination if you're after lively apres ski, but for families or those dedicated to skiing rather than partying, it's great.

Connecting all these villages means that the ski area is sprawling, with 250km of pistes to explore. But the biggest draw is the so-called 'longest run in Europe': la Sarenne, a 16km black starting at the highest point of the resort, Pic Blanc. There's a bit of a queue for the telecabin to the top but, reunited with our regular skis and boots, there's no way we're going home without trying it.

Pic Blanc can be cold and windy, but conditions today are quite mild. And even though we don't linger at the top I can feel the altitude – at 3,300m it has become harder to breathe.

La Sarenne is a great run. It's not too difficult, and was reportedly given its status as a black because it is committing rather than steep or technical – once you're on it there's no option to take a shorter, easier piste, and there are no cafes where you can stop for a break. We also don't think it seems as long as 16km but my thighs are still screaming by about half way down.

My favourite bit is a huge, wide open section of piste with a long run-out at the bottom so you can blast down without worrying about what's around the next corner. The last part of the run is very flat, through the pretty Sarenne gorge, so it's important to keep your speed up, particularly if you're on a snowboard. When we finally reach the lift at the end, after 2,000m of descent, I'm ready for a sit down.

Alpe d'Huez has something for skiers of all levels, from beginner slopes to exciting couloirs for off-piste skiing. There's night skiing on the Signal mountain every Thursday and, for those who like partying as much as skiing, there's a Folie Douce pub too, complete with dancers. Big news is that they're planning to build a cable car connecting Alpe d'Huez to the neighbouring resort of Les Deux Alpes, to open in 2020, which will result in about 475km of pistes and one of the three biggest ski regions in the Alps. But there's plenty to do in Alpe d'Huez even without that, and it's currently cheaper than the bigger resorts, at least in terms of food and drink on the slopes. Which means we've definitely deserved a final beer to celebrate our holiday. **AT**



Above the clouds:
skiing Alpe d'Huez

Need more info?



Get there

The nearest international hub to Alpe d'Huez is Grenoble. We took the train from St Pancras, changing in Paris from Gare du Nord to Gare de Lyon. It took about seven hours, and was a relaxing way to travel, although those with skis to lug around found it less so. There's a new direct train from St Pancras to Lyon Part Dieu, which takes four hours 41 minutes and costs from £89 return. See www.voyages-sncf.com.

We arranged a transfer between the railway stations in Paris with www.ski-airport-transfers.com. Or you can negotiate the Metro but again, trickier with skis. Vaujany is just an hour's drive from Grenoble. Ben's Bus offers transfers: www.bensbus.co.uk.



Stay there

We stayed with Ski Peak in its flagship chalet, Chalet Saskia, renowned for excellent food. The chalet has two wings, each sleeping 10-13 people – you can hire the whole thing, or just one side, or on a room by room basis. There's also table tennis, table football and a hot tub. Prices start from £960 per person including flights and transfers.

Visit www.skipeak.net. Other accommodation in Vaujany includes a wide range of self-catering apartments.



Ski info

Hire skis and boots from A Tout Sport or Ride for Life. A six-day lift pass for Alpe d'Huez Grande Domaine Ski costs £185. Half a day of Telemark instruction starts from £108 for one person. See www.esf.net, and www.skiset.co.uk for telemark kit rental (£25 per day).



Eat and drink there

We had a great lunch at La Folie Douce (www.lafoliedouce.com) on the slopes, where there's also plenty of partying, and at La Bergerie (www.villard-reculas.com), which serves local specialities. And on the chalet hosts' night off, in Vaujany we ate at La Remise Restaurant, for wood-fire pizzas and mountain specialities.



More info

At the leisure centre there's bowling, ice skating, a pool and a spa. For more on Vaujany and Alpe d'Huez Grande Domaine Ski, see www.vaujany.com and www.alpedhuez-granddomaine-ski.fr.

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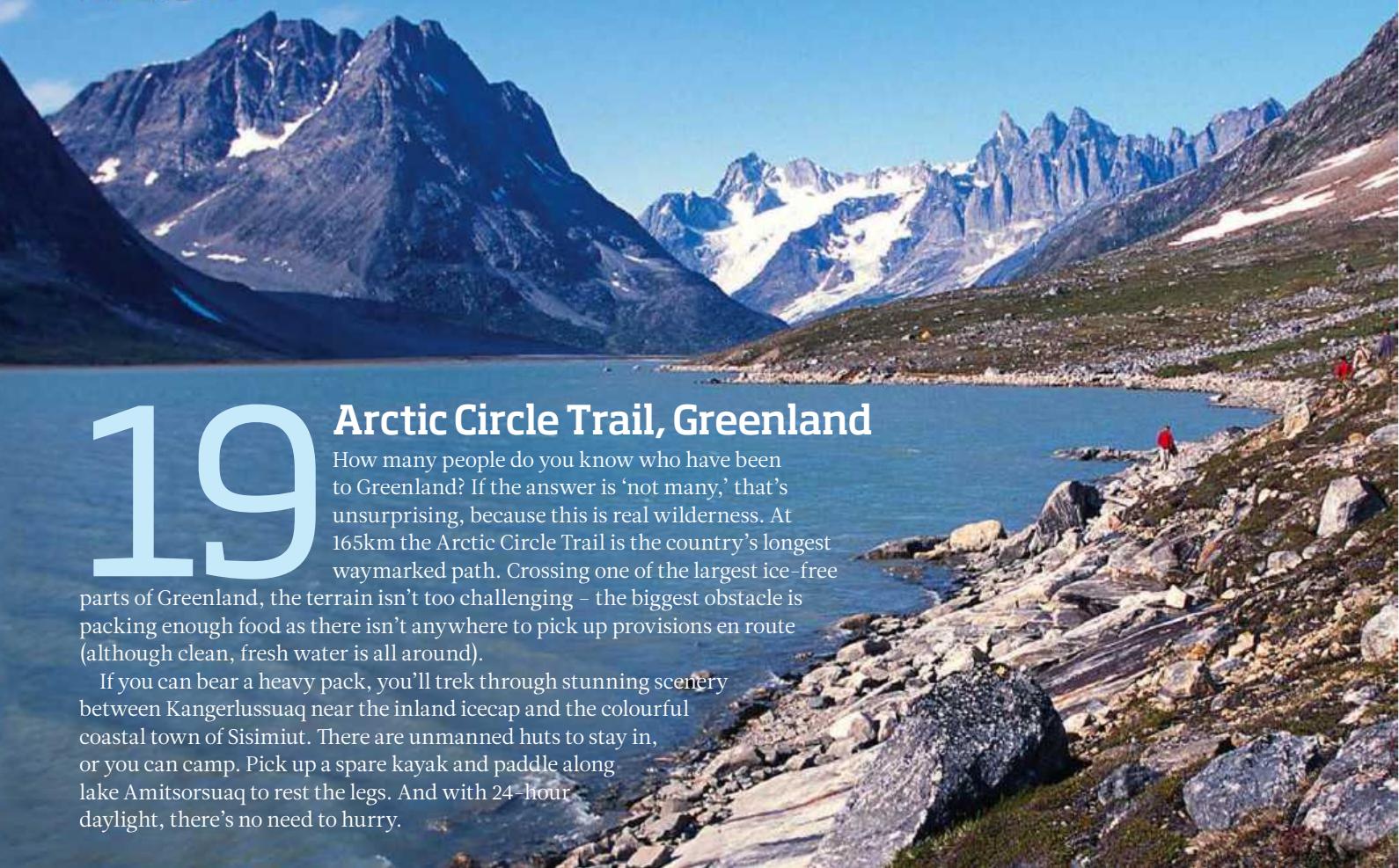
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20

Venezuela's Lost World

Roraima in Venezuela was the inspiration behind Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's book *The Lost World*, about dinosaurs surviving on the top of a remote South America *mesa*, and if you go there, you'll slowly find yourself thinking that it's not as far-fetched as it sounds.

Roraima (pronounced Ro-rhyme-a) looks impossible to climb without ropes, but there's a fault line in the vertical wall that means you can hike to the top. It's a six-day round trip, trekking in sweltering humidity, through cloud forest, over boulders and up a steep, steep finish, tackling waterfalls that cross the path head on. The top of the plateau is anything but flat too, full of rock sculptures, deep pools, sand and shrubs. And the view over the edge of the escarpment, into swirling mist and a sheer drop of hundreds of metres, is like reaching the end of the universe.



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Arctic Circle Trail, Greenland

How many people do you know who have been to Greenland? If the answer is 'not many,' that's unsurprising, because this is real wilderness. At 165km the Arctic Circle Trail is the country's longest waymarked path. Crossing one of the largest ice-free parts of Greenland, the terrain isn't too challenging – the biggest obstacle is packing enough food as there isn't anywhere to pick up provisions en route (although clean, fresh water is all around).

If you can bear a heavy pack, you'll trek through stunning scenery between Kangerlussuaq near the inland icecap and the colourful coastal town of Sisimiut. There are unmanned huts to stay in, or you can camp. Pick up a spare kayak and paddle along lake Amitsorsuaq to rest the legs. And with 24-hour daylight, there's no need to hurry.

18

The Legend of El Dorado, Colombia

"We've designed the Legend of El Dorado to be one of the world's premier multi-stage mountain bike races," says Dave Procter, organiser of a new event in Colombia taking place in August 2016.

"The route pays homage to Colombian cyclists past and present, infamous for their climbing ability, with a staggering 17,000m of ascent over the seven-stage, 600km race," he continues. "Riders will pass through seven 'worlds,' from humid jungles to scorching desert, and even over an active snow-capped volcano."

"All of this will be topped off with professional support and wonderful Colombian hospitality, allowing everyone to enjoy the best of Colombia, both on and off the bike. We're expecting a few pros to enter, but it will mainly be amateurs who want a week of fairly competitive cycling."

"Hardly anything like this has ever been done in South America before, and definitely not in Colombia," he finishes. See www.legendofeldorado.com.





17 Trek Nepal

Trekking in Nepal is one of AT's favourite hobbies. But don't just take our word for it. Kev Reynolds has written a new book full of tales from a lifetime of hiking in the country. The following extract offers a taste of life on the spectacular trails.

For an hour or so I walk alone, senses alert to every new experience. This is what I've dreamed of for so long. There are riches to be harvested wherever I turn; I'm greedy for life.

Suddenly I'm aware of a young voice singing. Delivered in a strong but high-pitched key, the sound is approaching fast, and when I turn I see our 15-year-old porter we've named Speedy come tripping along the trail under his 20kg load.

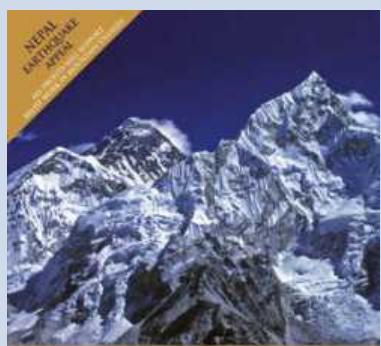
I continue until there's a broadening of the trail. There I stand back, but Speedy stops too, leans his doko against a convenient rock, adjusts the namlo on his sweating forehead, and gives me a wide grin. I pull my tape recorder from my pocket and give him a demonstration. Eyes wide with wonder, he takes the recorder from me to examine. I sing a few phrases, play them back and point to him. "Will you sing for me?"

He understands my request and willingly gives a rendition of the song he'd been singing. Then we resume our journey. But the young lad soon draws ahead, singing a different song this time, his plastic flip-flops slapping a rhythm of their own on the bare-earth trail, while I jog behind trying to record more of this special soundscape.

Together we make rapid progress along the trail. A broad valley lies far below the ridge – the same valley that was drowned by a cloud-sea at dawn. Now I see it is patched with trees and villages, and on its far side hillsides are cleft with streams draining the Singalila Ridge where cloud-shadows ripple their own journeys.

Abode of the Gods

Abode of the Gods by Kev Reynolds costs £19.95, with profits from the sale of the book helping communities destroyed by the recent earthquake in Nepal. See www.cicerone.co.uk.



Kev Reynolds
ABODE OF THE GODS
Tales of trekking in Nepal



16 **Via ferrata, Italy**

16

It astounds us that the Dolomite Mountains in Italy aren't top of everyone's must-explore list. These dramatic pale limestone peaks make the rest of the Alps look mediocre. There's plenty of trekking, but the best way to travel is on via ferrata routes: metal cables and ladders across the mountains that, when geared up with a harness, helmet and specialist lanyard, allow regular hikers and scramblers to get into spectacular terrain usually only reached by climbers. Exhilarating.

And for a bonus fact, did you know that *Adventure Travel*'s publisher Alun Davies was once made a freeman of Trentino for bringing the region's via ferrata routes into mainstream tourism? You do now.

15 **End of the earth: Antarctica**

Antarctica must be on 99% of adventurers' dream bucket lists. Most people arrive by crossing the fearsome Drake Passage, and the reward for two gruelling days at sea is a world where nature is in charge: endless penguins, lolling seals, breaching whales, wheeling albatrosses and, of course, mind-blowing ice. And you don't just have to stay on board. On Oceanwide Expeditions' base camp trips, ships stay for two or three days in one place, allowing passengers to disembark for everything from ski mountaineering, hiking and camping to polar diving, kayaking and photography workshops. See www.oceanwide-expeditions.com.

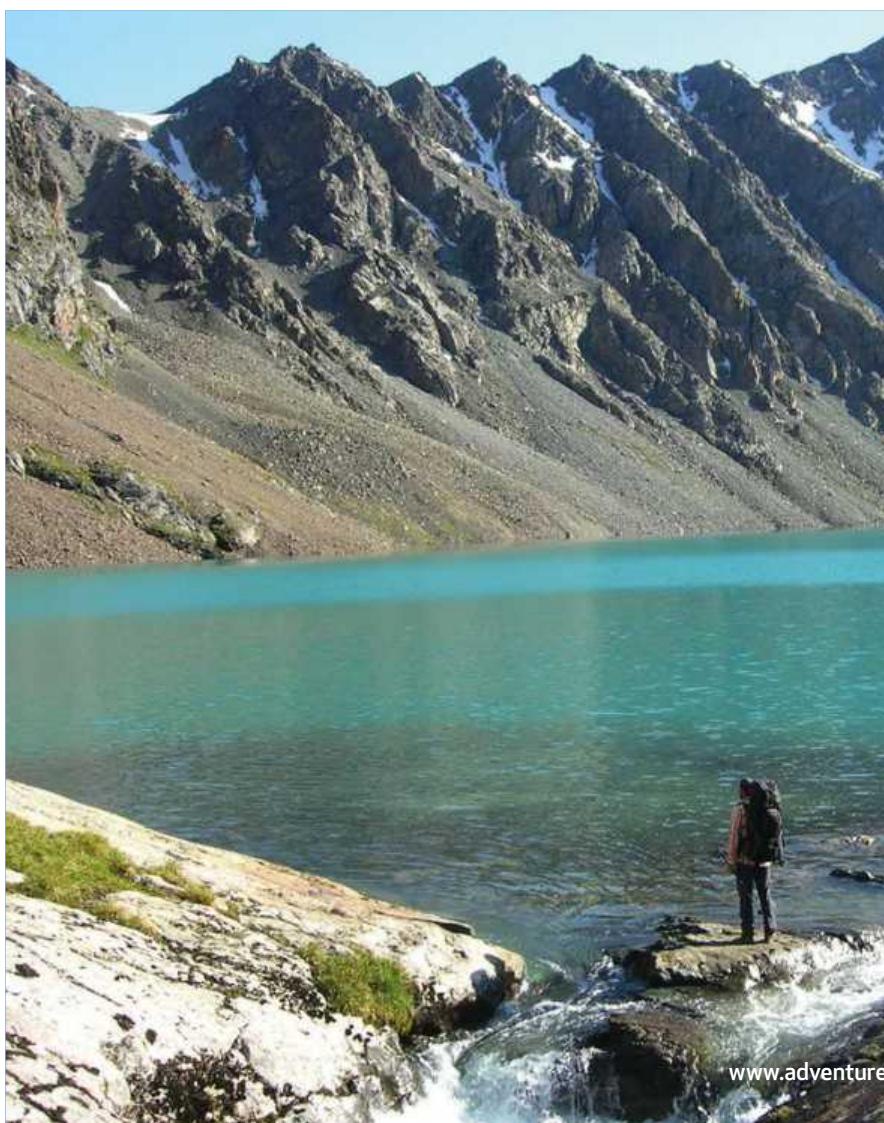


Photo: Markus Amon

14

North Africa's highest peak

Arriving to the heat and chaos of Marrakesh airport, donkeys joining the mass of cars and motorbikes waiting to greet flights, it's hard to believe you're only a three- or four-hour flight from the UK. There's loads to do in Morocco, from surfing to rafting to climbing, but we're all about the High Atlas Mountains. North Africa's highest peak Toubkal is a gruelling but rewarding hike that will leave you short of breath as you reach its 4,167m summit. It can be done in a five-day trip from the UK, but to better acclimatise and really appreciate your surroundings, take a little longer. Or for the novelty of packing an ice axe for Africa, try a winter ascent in crampons.



13

Tien Shan Mountains, Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan – impossible to spell, impossible not to fall in love with. Expect unspoilt mountain landscapes, virgin summits, unexplored valleys and traditional nomadic people, many of whom still live off the land and in yurts. The Tien Shan or Celestial Mountains stretch for 2,500km across the country. At just over 7,000m, Khan Tengri (the Prince of Spirits) is the range's most spectacular summit – mountaineers can climb it, hikers can trek to its base camp. There are also plenty of unclimbed peaks waiting for a first ascent. Check out World Expeditions' new Land of the Nomads and Celestial Mountains trip, www.worldexpeditions.com.

12

Cape Wrath Trail, Scotland

This is Britain's toughest long-distance trail, traversing 230 miles of Scotland's wildest scenery, starting from the foot of Ben Nevis and finishing at the dramatic Cape Wrath lighthouse. There are often no paths, re-supply points are limited and the terrain is remote and rugged, so it's not for the inexperienced. The reward is some of north west Scotland's most magnificent landscapes.

"The beauty of the route is there is no fixed route. Take detours, try alternative routes, but whatever you do don't rush," says Iain Harper, author of Cicerone's *Walking the Cape Wrath Trail* guide. Walk April-June or September-October to avoid the midges in the height of summer...





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10

Simien Mountains, Ethiopia

Described as Africa's answer to the Grand Canyon, the Simien Mountains of northern Ethiopia are a landscape of peaks, plateaus, sharp cliffs and deep valleys, criss-crossed by paths that have been used by local farmers and villagers for centuries. Scramble up Ethiopia's highest peak, Ras Dashen at just over 4,500m, and trek to Jinbar Waterfall, that cascades 500m through a hole in a rock to the bottom of a gorge. Wildlife to spot includes gelada baboons, giant lammergeyers (Africa's answer to the South American condor) and, if you're lucky, Ethiopian wolves. Travel here can be tough, with basic facilities, but Ethiopia is shedding its stereotype of a country synonymous for poverty, and you'll get a warm welcome.



EDITOR'S
PICK

11

Cuillin Ridge, Skye

“The Cuillin Ridge on Skye isn’t just one of the best places in the UK, it’s one of the most exciting places in the world,” says *Adventure Travel*’s editor Rosie Fuller.

If you like rock, and scrambling, this is your Mecca. The 12km ridge – a continuous scramble – can be completed all in one go, usually involving an overnight bivvy, more than 30 hours out in the mountains and a hefty dose of type two fun. But you don’t have to do the whole thing at once – picking a peak or two to tackle day by day is equally epic. Expect endless rock and stunning views of the west coast of Scotland.



9

Spot the Northern Lights

‘Deeper magic from before the dawn of time.’ That’s what saved Aslan in CS Lewis’s *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, and that’s how it feels when you first see the Northern Lights – primeval, mysterious and as if something bigger than us is at work. Not only is Aurora Borealis an amazing spectacle but, in northern Europe or Canada, seeing the lights generally involves snowshoeing, skiing, snowmobiling or dog-sledding through spellbinding winter scenery. Ice climbing is even an option on Off the Map Travel’s Original Grand Aurora trip: www.offthemaptravel.co.uk.

8

Alpamayo Circuit, Peru

Forget the Inca Trail – for an epic hike in Peru, go north, to the northern part of the Cordillera Blanca mountain range. This 10-day circuit starts and finishes in the town of Huaraz, circumnavigating the 5,947m Alpamayo, known as one of the most beautiful mountains in the world – a perfect pyramid with big snowy faces and an arc-ing ridge line. You'll see few other hikers, particularly once you get round the back of the circuit, and the trek has a high point of 4,848m, followed by a huge descent to Cuillicocha Lake. Check out the January/February 2016 edition of *Adventure Travel* for a full feature on the trek.





ADVENTURER'S CHOICE

Serious adventurers tell us their life-changing big trips – and what they want to do next...



Faruk Akbas Ever since I picked up a camera some 25 years ago, I'd always wanted to see the tribes of southern Ethiopia. Their villages are so isolated that customs we consider 'primitive,' such as wearing discs of pottery in the lower lip, still continue to this day. No Turkish photographer had been there. I went in the summer of 2013.

"I'd taken millions of portraits, but it wasn't until I met the Mursi that I realised how many undocumented places there still are in the world. Even though I'd been travelling for 20 years, this was like a fresh beginning. Now I know just how big the world is."

Faruk Akbas, photographer and ambassador for travel clothing company Craghoppers. See www.craghoppers.com.



Alastair Humphreys The greatest adventure I've ever done was spending over four years cycling round the world. I pedalled 46,000 miles from my front door, across 60 countries and five continents before eventually arriving back home again. I crossed the oceans by boat so made it round the planet without needing a plane."

Alastair Humphreys, adventurer and ambassador for Wrangler's Born Ready Adventures campaign. See www.wrangler-europe.com/bornready.



Tori James My favourite adventures are long-distance ones involving multiple disciplines and a variety of countries and cultures. I'd like to canoe down the Danube River, cycle around the Black Sea and climb Mount Elbrus en route. Political instability might put this idea on hold for a while though."

Tori James, the first Welsh woman to climb Everest and ambassador of Wales: Year of Adventure 2016. See www.torijames.com and @torijtweets.



7 Paine Circuit, Patagonia

“Patagonia is every keen adventurer’s paradise – glaciers, mountains, lakes, world-class walking, wildlife and, to top it all off, amazing food and wine to fuel all that adventure with,” says Laura Paterson, worldwide tours manager for Macs Adventure. At the southern tip of South America, shared between Argentina and Chile, Patagonia topped the company’s poll as the ultimate dream adventure destination. Most spectacular of all is the Torres del Paine National Park, with pink granite towers, electric blue lakes, surreal glaciers and raging rivers. The best way to see it is by trekking the Paine Circuit: eight days and 130km of hiking and camping, including the infamous John Garnier pass – one of the high points of the trek at about 1,200m above sea level. The weather can be, let’s say, ‘unpredictable’ – although this just makes it feel even wilder.

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6 Ultimate bike ride: the Great Divide

This is the world's longest mapped off-road cycle touring route, following dirt roads and 4x4 tracks some 2,800 miles from Banff National Park in Canada all the way down to the Mexican border. And it's not just the miles – riders clock up over 60,000m of elevation (nearly seven Everests) along the way too. It takes about three months, and they will be three glorious months of riding and camping in Big Sky country, never far from North America's continental divide. You can take a trailer or panniers; a full-suspension bike is recommended, but many do it on rigid touring bikes.



5 John Muir Trail, California

Of all of the USA's incredible hiking trails, this is the best. It starts in Yosemite National Park, home to the iconic Half Dome and El Cap, passes through the Sierra Nevada Mountains, taking in highlights like Kings Canyon, and finishes 215 miles later at Mount Whitney, the highest mountain in continental United States (Denali in Alaska is the highest). The huge granite cliff faces of the Sierra Nevada are mind-blowing, you can detour to see Giant Sequoia trees – and don't forget your bear spray.





4

The Welsh 3,000s

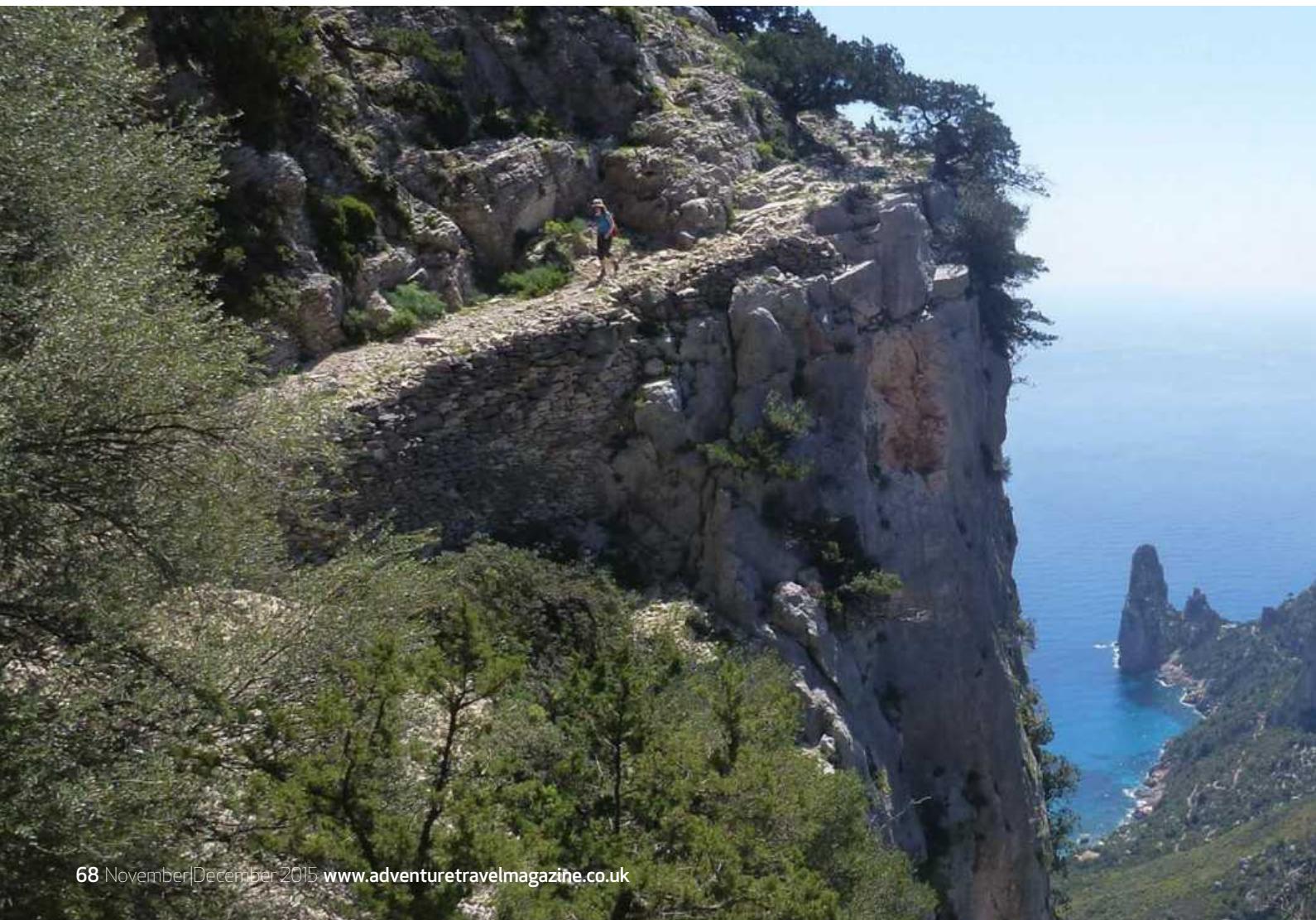
Wales has pronounced 2016 as its Year of Adventure but if you're anything like us that's preaching to the converted – we're already sold. New adventures in the country include the world's longest man-made wave at Surf Snowdonia and Europe's longest zip line at Zip World. The Wales Coast Path opened in 2012,

becoming the world's first uninterrupted route along a national coast. But we're still drawn to the mountains.

The Welsh 3,000s challenge involves climbing all of the country's peaks that are over 3,000ft (about 915m) – there are 14 of them. You can attempt it in one tough but magnificent day or, to make the most of it, split the journey over two or three days, enjoying the contrast between rocky Tryfan and wide open Foel-fras, and crowded Snowdon and the deserted lesser-known peaks. The knife-edge ridge on Crib Goch requires a head for heights, but it's a highlight.

3 Tongariro Crossing, New Zealand

A one-day wonder. This 20km hike in Ruapehu, New Zealand's North Island, is a blast of some essential Kiwi ingredients: a tough climb up the still-active Red Crater, the brilliant green Emerald Lakes in the middle of otherwise rugged red scenery, steam vents and the smell of sulphur, and a descent through forest. Be prepared to share the view with lots of tourists, or avoid them by tackling the longer (three or four-day) Tongariro Northern Circuit, one of the country's nine Great Walks.





2

Wild Sardinia

The GR20 in Corsica has a reputation for being Europe's toughest trek. Not bad... but we can trump it. The Selvaggio Blu in neighbouring Sardinia is even wilder. It's only 40km long, but don't let that fool you: the path is hard to find; it involves abseiling and climbing, and it doesn't pass anywhere you can get fresh stocks of food or water. Rewards (if that wasn't exciting enough) are a trek with a pioneering feel, with views of Sardinia's spectacular coast and whopping limestone cliffs. Purists do the route carrying all of their gear, with a resupply of food and water stashed half-way, but there's also the option of having camping kit, food and water dropped off by boat at prearranged points each day - by no means an easy get-out. Isolated beach camping with a dip in the sea after a long, hot day of trekking? Yes please.

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1

Kilimanjaro, Tanzania

Kili. The highest freestanding mountain on the planet. One of the world's seven summits. A whopping 5,895m yet doable by regular hillwalkers... and on the way up you'll pass through climatic zones from equatorial to arctic. What top 20 list would be complete without it? Our favourite routes up are Lemosho – quieter and longer than the others, offering better acclimatisation and higher chances of summiting – and the rarely climbed Western Breach, which is the mountain's steepest and most exciting line of ascent, only suitable for those with scrambling or mountaineering experience, and who are already acclimatised (sounds like an excellent excuse to tackle nearby Mount Meru beforehand – a challenging and spectacular peak in its own right). However you tackle it Kilimanjaro is a tough climb, but the sense of achievement is monumental. A winner. **AT**



GET IN TOUCH!

Have you done any of our top 20 adventures? Did we miss any? Get in touch via our Facebook and Twitter pages (@ATmagOnline, @RosieATmag) to let us know.



Epic World Records

The latest edition of the *Guinness Book of Records* is out, and to celebrate we've got our hands on some of the most impressive, terrifying and wacky new entries. Be amazed...

1 HIGHEST BASE JUMP

The highest BASE jump from a building was achieved by Frenchmen Fred Fugen and Vince Reffet, who jumped off the 828m Burj Khalifa tower in Dubai, UAE, on 21 April 2014.



2 OLDEST FEMALE CIRCUMNAVIGATION

The oldest woman to sail single-handedly around the world is Jeanne Socrates from London, who was 70 years and 325 days old when she completed a solo, unassisted and non-stop circumnavigation of the world. She finished in Victoria, British Columbia, on 8 July 2013, after 258 days, 14 hours, 16 minutes and 36 seconds at sea in her 38ft monohull Nereida.



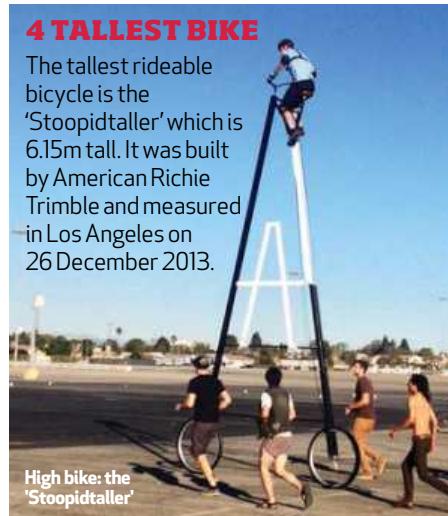
3 GREENLAND ICE CAP

The first circumnavigation of the Greenland ice cap was accomplished by Dixie Danseroer (Belgium) and Eric McNair-Landry (Canada) between 10 April and 4 June 2014. The 4,044.9km (2,513.38 mile) kite-supported and unassisted expedition started and finished at N 66.02771 – W 39.26409, in a circular route on the world's largest island and second largest ice body.



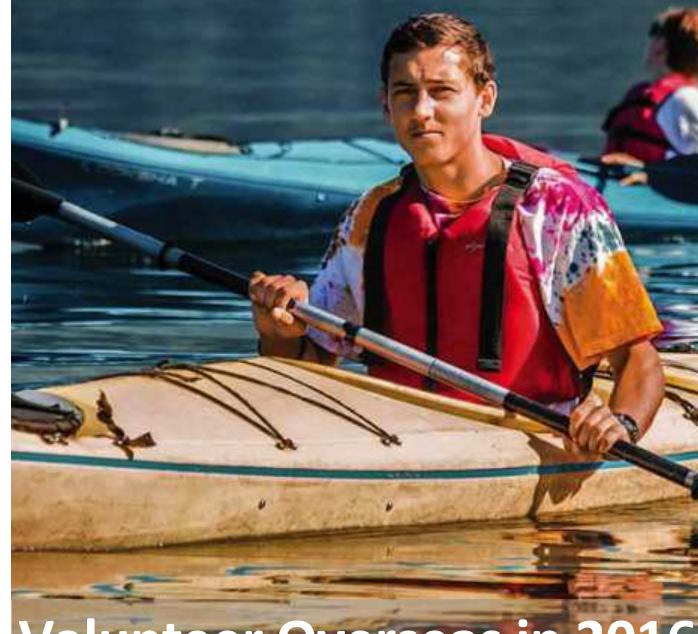
4 TALLEST BIKE

The tallest rideable bicycle is the 'Stoopidtaller' which is 6.15m tall. It was built by American Richie Trimble and measured in Los Angeles on 26 December 2013.



The *Guinness World Records 2016 Edition* is out now (£20). See www.guinnessworldrecords.com.

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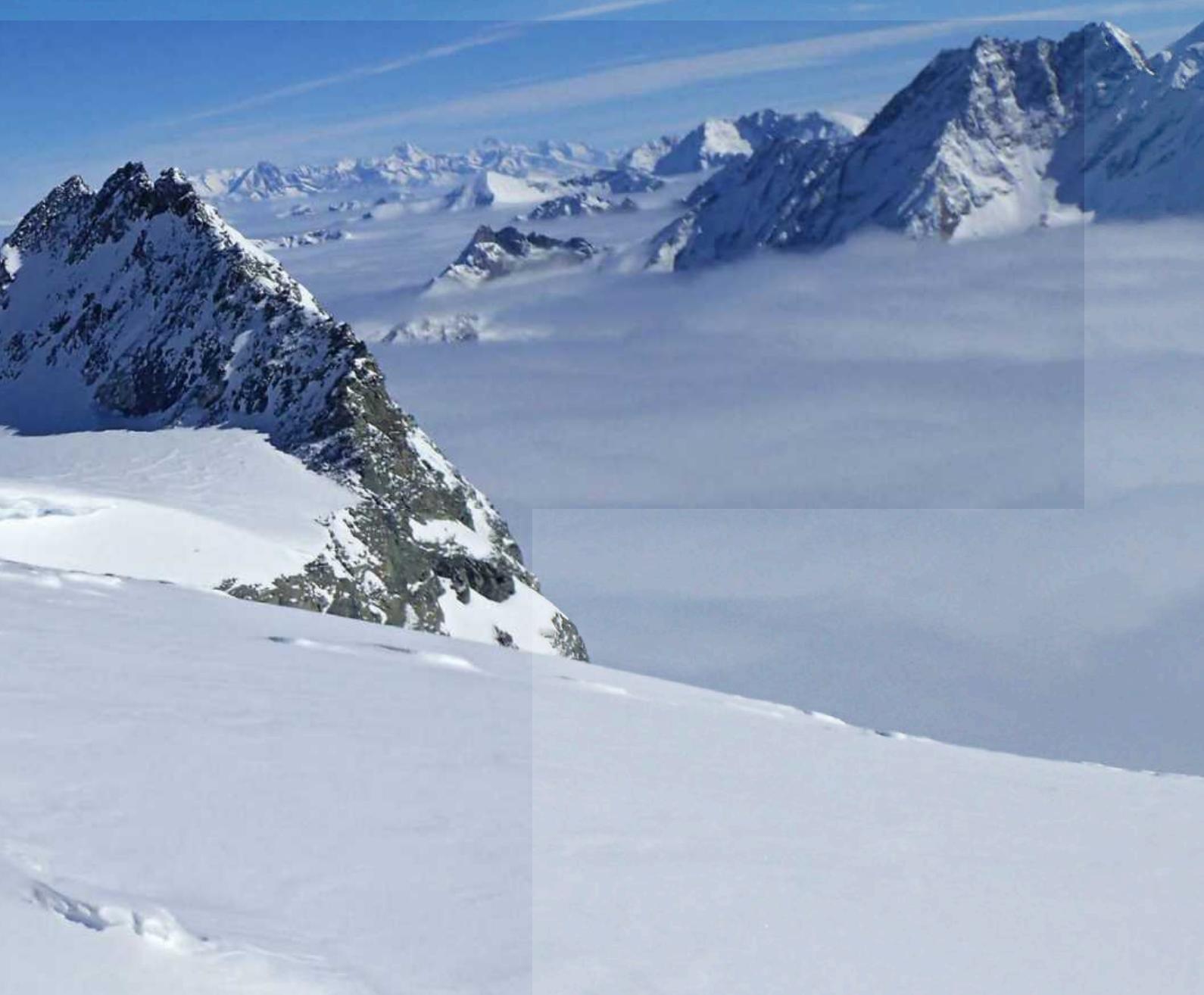
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A ski touring classic

Rosie Fuller tackles the world's most famous ski tour: the Haute Route, from Chamonix to Zermatt







If Carlsberg did mountain huts, they would always be downhill,' I think. The stench of the toilets, the number of people to a bed and the various other quirks of mountain refuges are a big topic of conversation on any ski tour in the Alps but, skiing down to the dramatically perched Vignettes Hut, the last stop on the Haute Route, I decide I'm content with any that don't involve an uphill slog at the end of a tough day.

Connecting the alpine towns of Chamonix in France and Zermatt in Switzerland, the Haute Route ski tour is a classic. It's world famous. I once met a couple from Colorado who were planning to come all the way to Europe to ski it. It generally takes six days, and they are six days of tough climbs,





Pristine power: fresh tracks on the Haute Route



Smiley ski-tourers: on the way up Pigne d'Arolla

hopefully powdery descents, glacial terrain and high mountain scenery.

The problem with a linear route is that you are at the mercy of the weather. That's always the case in the mountains, of course, but if you've got a set route to follow and hut bookings to honour, you need to be prepared to alter plans – maybe even using public transport or taxis – if conditions are bad.

Despite changeable conditions all week, we've made it close to the end. It's just the final triumphant ski into Zermatt, in the shadow of the Matterhorn, to go. "My success-ometer has swung to positive," says Dave, that evening in the Vignettes Hut.

From Northern Ireland but based in Sheffield, Dave Hollinger is our mountain guide for the week. His favourite piece of skiing advice is,

'On a not-too-daunting gradient and fresh powder, I finally feel like I'm doing some decent off-piste skiing'

"adopt a dynamic stance." We take the piss every time he says it, on everything from tricky descents to traversing steep slopes, but it does help. Dave is very laid back. We never see him get flustered, except for the time he loses his sunglasses and has to borrow someone's spare pair, which look like they belonged to Elton John in the 1970s. Only then does he get stressed.

Even if you're joining a guided

traverse of the Haute Route, you still need ski touring experience, due to the committing nature of the trip, and the steep and exposed terrain. Our group of six ranges from a ski mountaineering racer to somewhat more amateur enthusiasts like me. We're all from the UK apart from Keith, who lives in Australia and is including the trip as part of an extended holiday to Europe to visit relatives.

The first day of our expedition is valley based. Using the Le Tour lift system at the end of the Chamonix Valley, we practise techniques we'll need on the journey, such as side-slipping down steep slopes, and attaching skins to our skis so we can walk uphill in them. And that evening Dave gives us a run down of everything he has in his rucksack (or rather what ➤

'Skinning through the clouds, different mountains appear in all directions'



Atmospheric: misty mountain scenery

Photo: Dave Hollinger

he doesn't have – it's important to pack light) as well as dishing out some group kit for us to carry between us, like a rope and a spare ski pole. An avalanche transceiver, shovel and probe are on everyone's kit list, as well as a harness, crampons, *couteau* (crampons for skis), an ice axe, and some snacks, warm layers and suncream.

As we organise our bags for the week ahead, we quaff a few of the emergency Snickers bars in an attempt to lighten our loads. And when Dave texts to remind us that we're allowed to include one luxury item in our rucksacks, we feel that in his eyes we've probably

already violated that many times over.

Day two is the start of the journey proper. We begin by taking the Grand Montets cable car up from Argentiere, but that's the end of the easy bit. After an initial descent with heavy packs in amazing glacial scenery, the day involves over 1,000m of climbing.

First we tackle the Col du Passon, which includes two steep, dizzying 'boot packs,' strapping our skis to our rucksacks and putting crampons on our boots. On one of these we rope together, which gives the added difficulty of trying to move at the same speed as everyone else while not tripping over



the rope. And the final ascent is the Col Supérieur du Tour, at 3,288m – a long, zig-zagging skin up in the sun. Most of us have run out of water by the time we get to the top, through a small gap in the rock, but it's a nice place to sit and get our breath back as the cloud comes in, making the scenery even more dramatic. And it isn't far to that evening's refuge, the Trient Hut (interesting loos), guarded by strange stone animal sculptures.

"Rosie – hug a bigger teddy!" Dave yells as we ski down Val d'Arpette the next day. He hasn't mentioned teddies up until now, but I get what he means



Only way is up: a tough climb on day one

and hold my arms further apart. The descent is first powdery, then icy, and it leads us to civilisation. We grab a coffee in the village of Champex before taking a taxi to Verbier resort. There are a few variations of the Haute Route; the route that goes via Verbier is called the 'skier's version' as it offers the most skiing.

It feels strange to be back in the world of lifts and pistes, but we're soon off again, on to terrain that is like Tellytubbyland – lots of rolling hills. And for the day's final climb we go higher than necessary to get a good ski down to Cabane de Prafleuri. On a not-too-daunting gradient and fresh

'After an initial descent in amazing scenery, the day involves over 1,000m of climbing'

powder, I finally feel like I'm doing decent off-piste skiing. So do the rest of the group, so we start to drop in words like 'pow pow' and 'blower' to try to sound like cool, backcountry ski kids.

The conditions are in our favour on day four. Even though there is low cloud and flat light, we can ski without skins

almost the whole way along a huge traverse above Lac des Dix. Apparently it can sometimes be much more difficult but, after an icy climb that sees us deploy our ski crampons, we reach the Dix Hut (2,928m) at just after mid-day. This can only mean one thing: Rosti for lunch, the Swiss mountain dish of fried potatoes, cheese, bacon and eggs. Well earned, we tell ourselves.

It's not all indulgence. After the pig-out we use the spare afternoon to practise using our avalanche kit, splitting into teams and seeing who is fastest to find buried transceivers with the shovel and probe. Throughout ➤



Sunny ascent: boot-packing up the Col du Passon

Photo: Dave Hollinger



Evening view from Cabane de Prafleuri

the week we've also been learning about travelling on glaciers. It's safest to stop about five metres away from the next person on a glacier, in case they're standing on a snow bridge that could fall through. When stopping to attach or remove skins, we only take off one ski at a time, again to reduce the chances of falling down a hole. And we always keep a sling looped across the body, which can be clipped to if we need rescuing from a crevasse.

Day five is the big one: Pigne d'Arolla, at 3,790m, and it's the highlight of the week. The snow is knee-deep or even deeper on the long climb up, and we're the first group out of the hut, which means Dave is doing all the hard work: breaking the trail for us to follow. It also means that we see how many people are on the route, as they bunch up behind us. But this is the first time it's felt busy and, as the clouds lift to reveal the most spectacular scenery all week, it doesn't ruin it at all.

After a short section of roped-up climbing on foot, there's more skinning through the clouds, different mountains appearing in all directions, to the top of the Pigne. It's brilliant up there, and I want to stay on the summit all day. I'm glad we don't though because, as the first group down, we

'We practise using our avalanche kit, splitting into teams to find buried transceivers'

get the best powder; pausing now and again for cloud to move off so we can carry on. And at the Vignette Hut, a few of us aren't quite ready for the day to end, so we do an extra run down the glacier. The fresh powder is worth the walk back up.

The last day is huge: crossing three cols with over 2,400m descent in total, including the final ski past the Matterhorn. So we're up early for a 5.30am breakfast. But we're unlucky. The weather is ferocious: a white-out with howling winds and an unstable snowpack. Retreating to the hut, I feel like I've taken a battering in a washing machine of ice and wind. We have to play cards until it's even safe enough to ski down to the nearest village of Arolla, where we finish with a celebratory beer.

Though we're sad not to have made it to Zermatt, we still had an epic week. And, of course, now I have something to go back for. **AT**

SAFETY GEAR

We took the following avalanche safety gear, supplied by Ellis Brigham (www.ellis-brigham.com)

Black Diamond

QuickDraw Tour 280 Probe
£49.99

A 280cm aluminium probe designed for quick deployment, with high visibility 1cm markings.



Black Diamond

Deploy 3 Shovel
£49.99

A rapid deployment shovel that locks into place with a quick pull, so you don't need to waste your time putting it together when you should be digging. To stash it in your pack, the handle slides into the blade.



Ortovox

3+ Transceiver
£229.99

A three-antenna device that shows direction, distance and number of victims, and is easy to get to grips with.



Colourful crowds: this was the busiest day



LET'S GO

Want to do what Rosie did? Here's how you can...

Get there

The Haute Route starts in Chamonix in the French Alps. Fly to Geneva (I flew from Heathrow with Swiss: www.swiss.com) and then take one of many transfer options: EasyBus (www.easybus.com) goes to Chamonix railway station, and Mountain Drop-offs (www.mountaindropoffs.com) drops you directly at your accommodation. The journey is just over an hour.

The Haute Route finishes in Zermatt but most people go back to Chamonix once they've completed it and travel home from there – that way you can leave the clothes you've travelled in and other such luxuries in Chamonix.

Stay there

Accommodation along the route is in mountain refuges. These are generally basic with lots of people to a room, often sharing one long bed, with no hot water or showers, although they do provide a hearty three-

course meal every evening. The Haute Route is popular so if you're organising your own trip, book huts in advance.

Before and after the route we stayed in the Hotel de la Couronne in Argentiere, just up the valley from Chamonix. See www.hotelcouronne.com.

What to take

I hired touring skis (plus skins and ski crampons) and boots from Sanglard Sports in Argentiere (www.rentski.com). Wherever you hire from, it's wise to reserve kit in advance.

Technical kit needed includes an avalanche transceiver, shovel and probe, and a harness, sling, carabiner and crampons. If you're doing an organised trip the company you go with can generally lend or rent you these (and should take care of more safety kit like ropes).

Other than that travel as light as possible, while bearing in mind that you can experience everything from ferocious cold and wind to climbing in the hot sun: pack a

sunhat, sunglasses and suncream as well as goggles and warm clothes. I find earplugs and an eyemask are essentials for sleeping in mountain huts; no need to carry a spare pair of shoes as the refuges provide them. All your kit should fit in a large daysack of around 45 litres.

Alpine Guides

I did the Haute Route with the company Alpine Guides, which is offering the trip over six dates in March and April in 2016. It costs £1,150 which includes all accommodation, guide's fees and expenses, but not travel or equipment. See www.alpine-guides.com.

Fitness and experience

You need some ski touring experience and reasonable off-piste ability to ski the Haute Route, and a good level of fitness as there's lots of ascent with a heavy pack. If you're organising your own trip you should be competent at route planning, glacier travel and assessing snow conditions.

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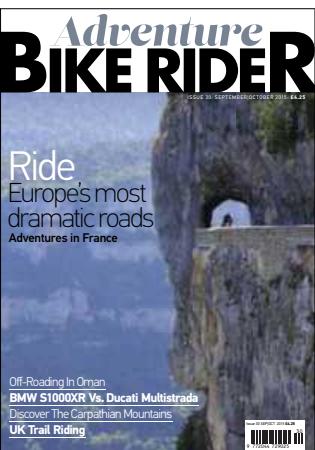
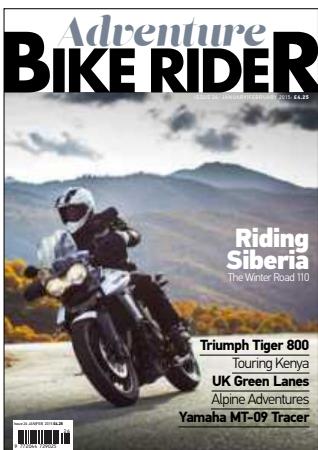


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20 years of gear

Adventure Travel was created 20 years ago, in 1995. To celebrate, we asked some of our favourite outdoor brands to tell us their products that have been around for as long as us – or even longer...

MEINDL BORNEO 2 MFS | £195

When was it introduced? 1995

What does it do? It's a classic three-season walking boot, leather lined with a Vibram sole. The Borneo introduced the concept of leather boots with more than one piece in the upper, allowing out-of-the-box comfort, rather than a period of breaking in as was usual at the time. Being leather lined it is one of the best pieces of footwear in warmer environments.

How has it evolved? The Borneo now has memory foam in the heel, so the boot moulds to the shape of the foot; a speed lacing system and an even more durable double density Vibram sole unit. The upper construction has been tweaked but in principle remains the same and is designed for the same three-season walking function.

www.meindl.co.uk



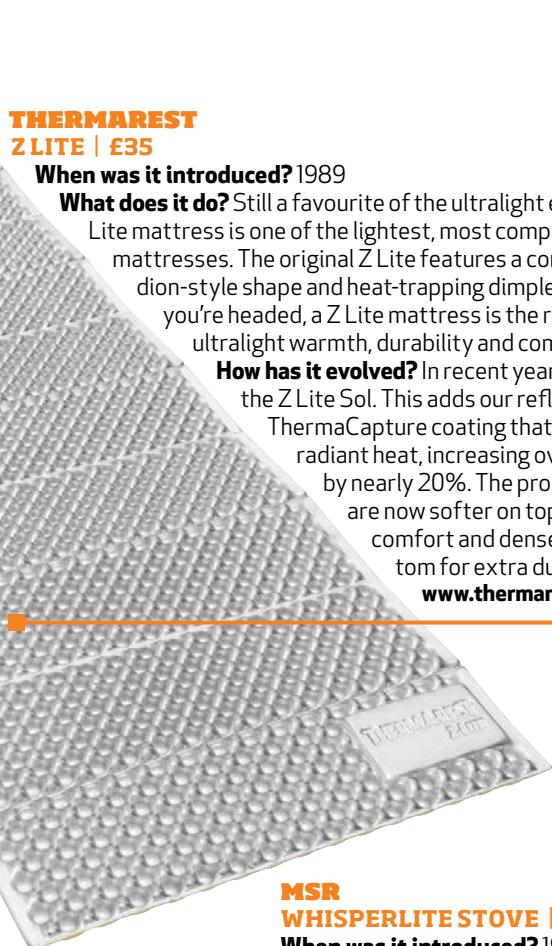
THERMAREST Z LITE | £35

When was it introduced? 1989

What does it do? Still a favourite of the ultralight elite, the Z Lite mattress is one of the lightest, most compact closed-cell mattresses. The original Z Lite features a compact accordion-style shape and heat-trapping dimples. Wherever you're headed, a Z Lite mattress is the right choice for ultralight warmth, durability and comfort.

How has it evolved? In recent years we launched the Z Lite Sol. This adds our reflective ThermaCapture coating that helps capture radiant heat, increasing overall warmth by nearly 20%. The proprietary foams are now softer on top for extra comfort and denser on the bottom for extra durability.

www.thermarest.com



MSR WHISPERLITE STOVE | £125

When was it introduced? 1982

What does it do? This has been the number one choice of stove for outdoor adventurers for over 25 years. Its easy-to-use design and durable, stainless steel and brass construction delivers dependable performance in almost any situation.

How has it evolved? In 1988 the stove went international. The original WhisperLite offered a compact and lightweight design, but its white-gas-only diet limited it to countries where this fuel supply was readily available. The WhisperLite International fixed this restriction. And in 2012 the WhisperLite went universal. When MSR's engineers were tasked with creating one stove that could do everything, they turned to the WhisperLite International 600 stove and began modernising one of the world's most trusted workhorses.

www.cascadedesigns.com/msr



BERGHAUS
FREEFLOW PACK, 20-40 LITRES
£60 TO £90

When was it introduced?

Launched to the trade in 1995.

What does it do? The Freeflow system provides a gap between the pack and the wearer, allowing a flow of air and preventing 'sweaty back syndrome.'

How has it evolved? The design and components of the system that gives the pack its name have been through several iterations. The system was a big hit from day one, but significant improvements have been made over the years. These days, the frame system is tougher and lighter, while the profile of a Freeflow pack is closer in shape to a standard daysack, making it easier to pack and providing a more comfortable and balanced experience. However, the basic principles of the system that promotes airflow at all times have not changed and the Freeflows are as popular as ever today.

www.berghaus.com

VANGO
NITESTAR 250 | £37.50

When was it introduced? 1970s

What does it do? Designed in the mummy shape, the Nitestar offers a perfect warmth-to-pack-size ratio, making it a number one choice for scouts and DoE groups. Stitching is offset so cold spots don't form at the stitch lines. It's made from 100% polyester hexagon ripstop 210T for strength, breathability and washability, and 100% polyester 190T Pongee – a soft microfibre fabric that is cosy, snug and breathable. The single hole siliconised hollow fibre insulation increases durability, maximises lofting potential for extra warmth and retains loft in damp conditions.

How has it evolved? The Nitestar's continuous evolution has resulted in a product which is significantly advanced compared to when it was first launched. 2016 will see improvements to the shaping around the chest and hood, updated shell fabric to 210T diamond embossed polyester and fleece footers added to the shorter version.

www.vango.co.uk



MONTANE
EXTREME SMOCK | £130

When was it introduced? This jacket has been around in one form or another since Montane began in the early 1990s.

What does it do? The Extreme Smock is a modern outdoor classic. A veritable workhorse jacket, it is the first truly technical soft-shell, single-layer mountain smock. Tested in hostile conditions for over 20 years by mountaineers, climbers and on multiple high Arctic and Antarctic expeditions, the Extreme Smock is a favourite of Mountain Rescue teams and outdoor professionals across the world.

How has it evolved? It has a contemporary design and fit, based on feedback from Montane athletes and consumers over the years. But much about this jacket hasn't changed, like the outer Pertex Classic fabric. We see this as a testament to its uniqueness and endurance in the marketplace.

www.montane.co.uk

BERGANS OF NORWAY
ALLY CANOE | £1,400

When was it introduced? 1972

What does it do? Ally canoes are designed to offer good stability and loading capacity, while being easily transportable. They are easy to manoeuvre in rivers and rapids, but are just as good for flat-water paddling. The canoe's flexibility allows it to ride over waves rather than crash into them and its flexibility makes encounters with underwater rocks much less harrowing than in a canoe made of fibreglass.

How has it evolved? The Ally has undergone various developments. In 2000, the bow and gunwale interface were redesigned to provide a greater, overall structural integrity, consistent skin tension and boat shape to improve its predictable performance on the water. In 2010, new performance-oriented ergonomic seats and the current chine and crossbar Nylon locking system was added, and in 2011 Ally introduced a 16ft model that combined some of the stability of the 16.5ft with the speed and directional stability of the 17ft.

www.bergans.eu





New Zealand's Great Rides

After the success of its Great Walks, New Zealand is launching Great Rides. On a pimped-down second-hand bike, **Sarah Stirling** investigates



Based out of a ramshackle garage in an unappealing suburb, Adventure Cycles was a far cry from Auckland's trendy inner-city bike shops. Stripped bits of bike oozed from shelves and drawers. Old tyres hung from the ceiling. A jam jar was labelled 'pens that do not work.'

Looking at the scruffy staff of bike-loving lost boys, I was wondering what kind of boss had gathered them, when a rusty Fiat Panda pulled up with 20 old bikes strapped to its roof.

"Bruce often gets stopped by the police when he goes to pick up bikes," the kid behind the counter grinned in admiration. "He just baffles them with science about weight distribution over axles or something."



Epic trails: Wanaka, in the South Island

WHO'S WRITING?



Sarah Stirling is a tech-nomadic adventure travel writer. Her life revolves around following the sun to the next outdoor escapade and then writing about it and photographing it. She's not quite rootless: her homeland of West Wales frequently draws her back, as does her second home, Chamonix. Find out where she is now at [instagram/sarah_stirling](https://www.instagram.com/sarah_stirling) and find out more on www.sarahstirling.com.

It was perfect. We wanted cheap-looking bikes that no-one would steal, fitted with cool stealth features to take the strain out of pedalling 50 kilos up steep mountain-bike tracks.

Over the next couple of days we became biking lost boys too. We added granny gear rings for the hills to our second-hand rides, finding the comfiest second-hand saddles in the shop and figuring out how to add pannier racks to front suspension forks.

When the bikes were finally ready, the staff hinted they'd like to keep us, then waved us off like family. We, though, were eager to start our journey; free of plans apart from wanting to tick off as many of the Great Rides as we could.

Following the success of their Great Walks, such as the Tongariro Circuit and the Routeburn Track, Great Rides are

the latest Kiwi thing. Like the footpaths, these off-road bike trails showcase the country's landscape and cultural highlights. The rides are the *pièce de résistance* of a bigger project – Nga Haerenga: The New Zealand Cycle Trail – a nationwide road cycling network.

As on the Great Walks, there are plenty of local adventure tourism companies eager to capitalise on giving you an Experience with a capital E: they'll route-plan and book your accommodation; drop you off and collect you from trail heads, and carry your bags from one place to the next.

If you prefer an adventure under your own pedal power, with tents, cooking gear and all, I can now confirm that's tried, tested and possible on some of the Great Rides... which reminds me of the first time we met Kiwi Chris. ➤



Cycle touring is like being in the Masons; panniers are the secret handshake. Other crazies who think this is a fun way to travel hail you like long-lost family out on the road and beam with relief when they see you at campsites, then pull up a chair to share tales of adventures and perhaps tuck into your dinner.

"The Queen Charlotte Track is sweet as," said Kiwi Chris that evening, leaning over to light-finger a potato from my camping plate. "Totally fine to ride with panniers."

Kiwi Chris had resigned from his job as a brewer to cycle-tour his own country in search of adventure (and hopefully a hot female cycling companion). He looked German with his serious blue eyes, blond hair and top-of-the-range cycle-touring kit, so he flew a New Zealand flag from his seat post to prove his heritage and his right to casually take on the gnarliest trails in the country with full panniers.

Back then, though, I was innocent of his ways. The first 10km or so of the Queen Charlotte Track was a dream, as Chris had promised, of easy biking through lush forest, popping out on pretty little coves. Then the hills began.

In New Zealand, you're constantly going up or down hill. So many times I

'Stripped bits of bike oozed from shelves and drawers. Old tyres hung from the ceiling'

pushed my bike up, perfectly balanced by the forces of loose gravel under my feet and the weight of the 'essential' material possessions in my panniers pushing back against my hands. One step forward, half a slide back.

The views were amazing – skyline ridges looking over the sea-drowned valleys, called the 'Sounds,' on either side of the ridge finger. But don't take panniers on the Queen Charlotte Track! It turned out Chris had once run the first 10km of the track, which is in the north of the South Island, and had no idea the other 60km was a lot steeper.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. The first thing to note is that cycling out of Auckland is an essential experience to miss if you don't want to put yourself off before you've begun.

Out of cars, Kiwis are incredibly friendly and laidback. This is a genuine conversation I had in a grocery store:

"Can you tell me the best way to Hot Water Beach?"

"Yeah, hey, I'll draw you a map. And here's my number if you need somewhere to stay. I can give you a lift if you want to go now?"

If you're Scottish, you're on to even more of a winner, as everyone seems to have Mac- or Mc-ancestry in New Zealand. An old lady stopped to ask where my other half Damien was from outside a supermarket. When he said 'Edinburgh' she clasped her hands in excitement: "Oh I do wish Morag was here! Her family were Scottish! I know she'd just love to meet you!"

But in cars Kiwis become downright thoughtless and dangerous to cyclists. I hope that the Kiwi government accompanies its cycle touring network plans with a campaign to raise awareness about courtesy to cyclists. So we came up with a plan to bypass the terror of cycling out of the metropolis – taking the ferry from Auckland straight across to Waiheke Island.

Suddenly we were cycling in a postcard of long, windswept beaches, secluded bays and dense bush. Twenty very hilly but stunning kilometres later we were at the island's other end, wobbly-legged, smug with our shortcut, waiting for the ferry over to Coromandel Town, for a tour of the Coromandel Peninsula and the Coromandel Walkway ➤



'So many times
I pushed my bike
up. One step
forward, half
a step back'

Gnarly: mountain
biking with panniers



The Queen Charlotte Track:
stunning... but not
recommended with panniers



Solitude: a west coast wild camp

– easy road riding with an optional 10km expert loop.

From Coromandel Town it's 26km to Colville, where a co-operative grocery store offers the last chance to pick up supplies before you continue into the Coromandel wilderness. It's said you can buy anything here.

We set up camp at Colville Motel, where nothing was too much trouble for the motherly Wendy, and headed to the local cove for a swim. It was completely empty. Heaven.

And increasingly heavenly: the coastal road from here runs beside stretches and stretches of empty white beaches and sweeping red Pohutukawa trees. Finally we reached Port Jackson, a huge curve of white sand surf break, and continued up to the little cove of Fletcher Bay. There was hardly anyone at the tiny campsite, and the ranger showed off pictures that prove this is an ultimate spot to catch huge fish.

From Fletcher Bay, a legendary track called the Coromandel Walkway curves around the tip of the peninsula. It's only 10km but called a 'walkway' for a reason. It's not recommended to bike it. But you're allowed to try!

Unable to resist the challenge, we set off. The almost electronic sounds of

'We risked our first wild camp when we came across a huge lake with the Alps reflected in it'

native birds were loud above the hum of our bikes. We could see the sea far below. The trails were gnarly but flowy. And, best of all, we'd left our panniers (and our washing) with the lovely Wendy, so our bikes felt super-light.

By the time we reached Stony Cove, though, the weather had turned as grey as the pebbled beach there, and the Pohutukawa trees were bleeding soggy red flowers on to a road that had become a river. Conditions can change quickly in New Zealand.

Taking shelter in the local restaurant, Damien said: "Come to New Zealand. It's always sunny, she says."

"Let's do it by bike, it'll be so much fun, he says," I said.

"Hey," called a voice from the next table. We turned to see a wizened man putting out a smoke.

"I'm your marriage counsellor. Chuck yer bikes in the ute and I'll take you to Wendy's."

Mountains to Sea

A not-to-be-missed Great Ride is Mountains to Sea, 317km of intermediate to advanced terrain, which begins on the flanks of the Mount Ruapehu volcano in Tongariro National Park, in the centre of the North Island, and finishes at the sea. In between it's a trip into New Zealand as it used to be.

We set off down Ohakune Old Coach Road, a cobbled corridor through dense bush. Cobbled? Yes – before the railway between Auckland and Wellington was completed, horse-pulled coach was the only way to cross this difficult stretch. It must have bone-jarring.

We popped out on to a huge former viaduct that's the site of New Zealand's first bungee jump operation. And as final proof that early New Zealand settlers were far more gnarly than us, there was the Bridge to Nowhere, built across the deep Mangapurua Gorge to encourage pioneering farmers to clear the bush and settle the area. It proved so remote and challenging to farm that roads were never built to it.

From here you can take a jet boat down the Whanganui River to Pipiriki, but we decided to continue under pedal power. Winding empty roads led us ➤



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Go Sarah! A thigh-burning climb

through dense bush; tall trees filled the sky like a magic eye picture.

Then we continued along the vast Whanganui River, which was important for trade and access to New Zealand's interior, both for the Maoris and later the European settlers. It also has a volcanic clay bed. "People pay good money for treatments with this stuff," Damien said:

Experimentally, I threw a handful at him. A complexion-enhancing mud fight ensued. Then we had a swim and continued on our way to the sea.

West Coast Wilderness Trail

Rugged shorelines, stunning lakes, towering forests and easy, rolling terrain, this 120km trail, graded easy to intermediate, was another favourite.

From Greymouth, we set off alongside the wild Tasman Sea on the west of the South Island. Green waves were rolling in over grey pebbles. Legend has it that the gold rush here started when three scruffy diggers turned up a lump of amalgamated gold and mercury weighing nearly 50kg.

We hardly saw anyone that day, so decided to risk our first wild camp when we came across a huge lake with the Southern Alps reflected in it. A few

locals turned up for a swim and waved to us as we cooked our dinner.

The next day we met a local 'Coaster,' barefoot and five years old, who came to chat to us when we stopped for lunch. "Where do you go to school?" we asked.

"Up the mountain," he said.

"Where's your nearest shop?"

"Down the mountain." Life seemed simple here.

We continued to Lake Kaniere, which was huge like the sea, and silvery pale like a mirror, reflecting our bike silhouettes in the evening light. We set up camp. A cheeky Weka bird tried to drag our bike lock into the bushes. It was too heavy, so it nicked our towels.

Continuing to Hokitika the next day, we found shops and cafes to restock our supplies. Some of the Great Rides are still being built, and the onward stretch to Ross wasn't finished. We were wondering what to do next, when Kiwi Chris cycled up again. He had come up with his new career opportunity.

"I'm going to win the Lotto, buy a big shiny car with a chiller in the back, and hand out cold beers to roadies."

If you see him on your travels, say hi from me. And if you're a hot, gnarly cycling chick don't hold back, he's probably keen. **AT**

HOT SPOTS

Don't spend the whole time cycling. Here are a few of Sarah's favourite haunts if you're looking for beauty spots to take some time off in...

■ Northland, North Island

Up here, New Zealand has a Mediterranean feel with orange trees and little islets covered in dense bush and grey pebbly beaches littered with soap-dish-sized Paua shells. Visit my friend Richard of Northland Sea Kayaking. Stay in his basic bush cabin, with its huge front window that's like a TV on to the changing moods of the sea. The toilet and shower are outside, down a track, with an awesome view. Oh, and that strange tin hat thing in the kitchen? That's your antiquated toaster.

■ Raglan, North Island

There are places you can never go back to because your memories turn out to be rose-tinted, like Photoshopped postcards that show a place in a light that has never actually hit the landscape there. And then there's Raglan. I leave a bit of my heart at Raglan Backpackers every time I go: don't miss it. Learn to surf here. Chill out in a hammock. Play games. Go barefoot. Hang out listening to amazing bands in local bars.

■ Golden Bay, South Island

Takaka is a big hill, but it's worth cycling over it to check out the community of hippies who have got lost there. Rainbow jumpers and homemade artwork; surfing, hiking and kayaking: it's a fun place to hang out. Don't miss Hangdog Camp, a fun climbers' campsite. Even if you don't climb it's a beautiful spot by Payne's Ford with a couple of epic swing jumps into the river.

■ Wanaka, South Island

I don't like the so-called adventure capital of New Zealand, Queenstown: it's too touristy and too full of adventure companies wanting to suck all the money out of you in return for an Experience with a capital E. But I love Wanaka with its lake that's this incredible saturated blue; so huge with beaches and equally huge and gorgeous mountains all around it reflected in the water. Don't miss going to the Patagonia artisan chocolate and coffee shop after your adventures.



Big skies, fun signs:
the empty road to
Mount Ruapehu



LET'S GO

Want to do what Sarah did? Here's how you can...

Great Rides

The Great Rides are predominantly off-road trails that are the premier rides on the New Zealand Cycle Trail – the nationwide cycling network. There are 22 Great Rides across both islands (and I expect more will be added over time), ranging from 11km all the way up to 317km and graded from easy to advanced. All of the Great Rides we cycled were well signposted with information boards telling us about history, flora and fauna. See www.nzcycletrail.com for more information.

Getting a bike

If you want to hire a touring bike, try Natural High. The company offers pick-up and drop-off locations throughout both the North and South Islands and is happy to arrange one-way hires. Hire for 14 days costs NZ\$724; see www.naturalhigh.co.nz.

If you want to buy a new mountain bike, try the Bike Barn. It seems to have a permanent half price sale on: www.bikebarn.co.nz.

For a real NZ experience head for Adventure Cycles. The staff are pros at making second-hand bikes into dream machines, but be warned, nothing happens there quickly. If you know about bikes, ask if you can work on your bike yourself in return for a discount. See www.adventure-auckland.co.nz.

Where to stay

I recommend a mix of the following:

- Department of Conservation campsites, which are basic and beautiful. You'll find a cold shower, a long drop toilet and possibly some additional luxuries like a fish-gutting sink if you're by the sea. Cost is minimal – NZ\$10 or so; a few are free.
- Accommodation found through the website Warm Showers, www.warmshowers.org. You can look up members around the world and message them to ask if you can stay for free, grab a shower, a coffee or ask some advice. It's not mandatory, but you'll probably be inspired to set yourself as available to other cycle tourers when you get home as it's such a fun way to meet and

give back to like-minded people.

■ Hostels – there are some wonderful, quirky ones in New Zealand. Check out reviews, as they vary wildly from party pads to family-friendly, and from charming to soulless. There's usually a washing machine you can use: don't put anything you particularly like in them as these top-loading cold-washers are renowned for chewing up your clothes and embedding rather than removing stains.

What to take

As little as possible is the simple rule for cycle touring. A few pairs of underwear. One change of cycling gear; there are simple washing facilities at every campsite. My luxury item was a wonderful 1000 fill power down duvet made by PHD (www.phdesigns.co.uk). It packs to the size of a melon and puffs to duvet size. We used it in conjunction with a double silk sleeping bag liner. Helmets are compulsory in New Zealand; a mirror so you can see crazy drivers approaching is recommended.



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Southeastern Skitour

You're going *where*? Kosovo and Macedonia aren't the first places you'd consider for a ski trip, but they are hidden gems, says **Sharon Wray**



When you hear the words Kosovo and Macedonia, what are the first thoughts

that jump into your head? I bet it's not a ski holiday. Few people are aware that these little countries, hidden away in Southeastern Europe, boast fantastic skiing in some of the most remote and spectacular scenery that this continent has to offer. Add to that a lack of crowds, cheap prices, a fascinating history and some of the friendliest people imaginable, and you have a pretty good foundation for a ski trip.

We had heard rumour that the skiing could be quite good in this part of Europe, especially for touring and

backcountry so, ever keen to escape the February half term crowds in Chamonix, and hoping to discover somewhere new, my boyfriend Charlie and I booked direct flights from Geneva to Pristina, the capital of Kosovo, for 10 days in February.

Kosovo only has one ski resort, which made for reasonably easy planning. Brezovica (pronounced Brez-o-veech-a) is in the south of the country, about 70km drive from Pristina. At the end of a 12km snow-covered single-track road, the whole resort boasts three hotels, a couple of bars and three working lifts (there are two others that are still in place but no longer run). To get to the hotels you are collected by skidoo, and the 'pistes' are virtually non-existent, with no markers or piste map. Quite the experience!

WHO'S WRITING?



Sharon Wray is a primary school teacher who, despite growing up in rural Shropshire, has spent most of her adult life in the French Alps. She first came to the mountains for a ski season in 2005 and never really left, finding it difficult to imagine returning to a country where skiing wasn't a daily option. She spent nine years in Chamonix, teaching at a school in Geneva, and has recently moved to Innsbruck to find out what the Austrian Alps have to offer.



Unexpected delight:
Popova Sapka in Macedonia



Ski Southeastern Europe:
fresh tracks, no people

We perhaps unwisely arrived in the dark, which made finding our accommodation fairly tricky, but after sliding around on the snow, investigating nearby buildings, we eventually found the Woodland Hotel, and were delighted when the porter jumped on to a skidoo to come and collect our luggage.

The following morning dawned bright and clear, and we headed out early to investigate ski passes and skiing options. The first thing that struck us was the hotel's proximity to the ski lift. The front door was about 50m from the bottom of the chairlift; its claim of 'ski in, ski out' certainly couldn't be disputed. The scenery was stunning and, to our amazement, there was no-one there. A couple of men were strolling casually about below the hotel, ➤





Tree skiing:
Brezovica, Kosovo

KOSOVO – NOT AS YOU KNOW IT

The Republic of Kosovo is a fascinating place. Gaining independence from Serbia in 2008, it is still a disputed territory and only a partially recognised state – a handful of countries still refuse to accept its independent status. It is an unusual mix of cultures, nationalities and languages, with the majority of the population originally hailing from Albania; a small minority of Kosovo Serbs and 5% from other nationalities. Luckily for us, those who worked in the tourist industry could all speak a little English, and those who didn't managed to muddle through with gestures and sign language.

With a few hours to spare on our final day, we

parked up in Pristina to see what the capital city had to offer. It feels like a city that has seen some hard times and is trying its best to rebuild itself. One of the best experiences of the trip was wandering down the main street when we were approached by a local man who had heard us talking. In his shaky English he wanted to know where we were from, and when he discovered we were from the UK he proceeded to shake our hands, hug us and repeatedly thank Tony Blair and George Bush while closing his hands together in a prayer-like fashion.

We spent about an hour with this man, who was desperate to show his appreciation to our country

for liberating Kosovo. We bombarded him with questions about what it was like during the war and were horrified at some of his stories. It was difficult to believe that during our lifetimes a bloody war was being fought here. He proudly took us to the New-born monument, erected to mark the liberation and 'new birth' of Kosovo. This was a sobering reminder of what Kosovo had been through during the late 1990s, and a lovely symbol of what this freedom meant to the people.

Kosovo is desperate for tourists to come and see what it has achieved, and as a Brit or an American you won't feel more welcome anywhere else in the world.

but there was not a single pair of skis to be seen. Were we missing something?

We asked at the hotel and were told that the lifts would probably open today, but it was a Thursday so maybe not. Still confused, we wandered across to the ticket office, a tiny booth that contained a woman with a notepad and a pen, and after being assured that the lifts would open, we bought two day passes for €15 each.

'When he discovered we were from England, he proceeded to shake our hands and repeatedly thank Tony Blair and George Bush'

They were true to their word, but we quickly discovered that 'lifts opening' meant one chairlift and one draglift running very slowly. An interesting start. At first, the one chair seemed like it would be rather limiting, but at this point we had no idea what Brezovica had to offer. Reaching the top of the lift, we were treated to a superb view across a stunning mountain landscape, and while our few fellow skiers headed straight back down underneath the cables, if you shuffled a mere 50m to the left, a completely new valley appeared, revealing a bowl of pristine, untouched powder. Clearly no-one ever came here.

We whooped our way down, overjoyed at our discovery, to find that in our absence they had cranked up the second chairlift, opening up the other side of the resort. We had gone from thinking we may have very little to occupy us, to being faced with the panic that there was so much to explore and not enough time to do it.

We headed up the second chair and found equally wonderful snow. There are a few pistes, partially bashed, but essentially the resort is almost all off-piste, and the whole area is covered in perfectly spaced trees, allowing for fantastic tree skiing through knee-deep powder. We didn't need to be enormously inventive to get away from the few other skiers and found a different way down each time for the rest of the day. Who knew a tiny ➤

'Clearly no-one ever came here. We whooped our way down, overjoyed'

Nice lines: cat skiers in Macedonia



Worth the walk: a short hike to the best runs

resort in Kosovo could deliver such enjoyment?

Buzzing from our wonderful, unexpected first day, we had dinner in one of Brezovica's bars (there are no actual restaurants, and the food is outrageously cheap). The following day brought the biggest snowstorm we'd ever seen. Needless to say the lifts did not open, so we stuck touring skins on to our skis and headed out to explore. We kept to the 'piste' areas that we knew from the day before and, despite the limited visibility, found some superb snow.

Our third day in Kosovo was a Saturday, and after two days of being almost the only people in the resort, we were not expecting the sight that met us. The previously deserted area at the bottom of the pistes was now rammed

'The whole resort boasts three hotels, a couple of bars and three working lifts'

with people, not skiing, but sledging. There were makeshift wooden stalls everywhere selling soft drinks and hot dogs, touts trying to rent sledges and skis, and people, masses of them, whooping and hollering with sheer joy as they hiked up the snow and flew down on sledges, losing control and crashing into each other, which only seemed to add to the enjoyment. We must have looked quite unusual wading towards the lifts with our colourful ski outfits and ski touring bindings.

We were sad to leave Brezovica, but we were off to a great start and there was so much more to discover. Next up was Macedonia, first stop Popova Sapka. This is much more developed than Brezovica, with clear pistes, more lifts and generally a more 'ski resort' feel. We opted for the four-star Hotel Scardus, which certainly delivered with its pool, sauna and superb restaurant. With a five-minute walk down to the lifts and the ability to ski back to the door, we felt we had once again done well with our choice.

Popova Sapka consists of a series of small chairlifts all on the same aspect, with one main lift that takes you much higher and therefore allows access to the back of the mountain. We were told that this chair had been bought from the Sarajevo Olympics in 1984, which



'We didn't need to be enormously inventive to get away from the few other skiers'

may have explained the frequency at which it stopped, and the enormous amount of time it took to get to the top. However, after a 20-minute hike, this was all forgotten as we stared down into another perfect bowl of untouched powder. We stuck with this chairlift all day, as the runs down the back were just amazing, and with a pair of skins you could access even more. The skin back to the resort was about an hour, but flat and along a cat track, with stunning views and solitude, so not much to complain about.

We headed up the same lift for our second day in Popova Sapka, with plans to do much the same as the day before. On our way down we spotted a cat ski machine making its way slowly up an impossibly steep face opposite us. We sat and watched as

the passengers disembarked and set off down the outrageously impressive face. Reaching the valley floor at the same time as the cat skiers, Charlie suggested asking the driver if we could pay to jump in for the next run. 'He can only say no,' we thought.

"You come, you do not pay," came the gruff reply when we popped our heads into the cat, so we jumped in alongside a group of good-natured Germans, and soon it was our turn for one of the best runs of our lives. It was certainly a tick for Popova Sapka.

The final stop on the Balkan ski tour was Mavrovo, a much more developed and western-style ski resort. It even had music pumping from the bars to make us feel at home. After our week of almost solitary skiing we were keen to escape the crowds, so stuck on the skins

and headed off into the distance. The terrain is much gentler here, catering more for families and beginners, but the resort is set around a stunning lake and we still managed to find some fantastic powder in remarkable scenery that looked more like the surface of the moon than a ski area.

Ten days skiing in Southeastern Europe wasn't long enough. We lucked out with generally fantastic weather and couldn't have been made to feel more welcome by the local people, who clearly saw so few British tourists that we were still a novelty. Kosovo and Macedonia are hidden gems and a wonderful experience. The skiing is not just good, it's fantastic, and coupled with the lack of people everywhere you go, I would thoroughly recommend it as a ski holiday destination. **AT**



Lakeside resort:
Mavrovo in Macedonia



LET'S GO

Want to do what Sharon did? Here's how you can...

Get there

Turkish Airlines and Pegasus Airlines fly from London to Pristina, the capital of Kosovo, with a stopover, and both Turkish Airlines and Austrian Airlines fly there from Manchester with a stopover. In Pristina car hire is very straightforward and Brezovica is a 1.5-hour drive. Skopje, the capital of Macedonia, is another place you could fly to.

Where to stay

Brezovica is a small, remote resort with limited accommodation, but the hotels are very pleasant, and convenient for skiing. I recommend the Woodland Hotel (approximately €70 per night). Other options are the Hotel Molika and the Hotel Sport Tours.

Popova Sapka is bigger with more choice. We stayed at the four-star Hotel Scardus (approximately €70 per night). A cheaper option is the Snow Patrol Lodge (about €50 per night).

Mavrovo was the most commercial place we visited: much more like a Western resort with a lot more skiers. There is a huge choice of accommodation, from hotels to lodges, rooms and B&Bs. However this resort can get very busy, especially at weekends, so it's advisable to book in advance.

When to go

There don't seem to be busy periods, like school holidays, in any of the resorts we stayed in. Depending on the condition of the snow, any time from mid December to the end of April should be fine. But avoid travelling at the weekend, as while Brezovica was almost empty during the week, at the weekend the single-track road up to the resort and the microscopic parking area had a backlog of about 10km.

What to take

Ski hire is possible, but the quality of the equipment is not up to the standard you would get in the Alps, so I recommend taking your own kit. If you like escaping the crowds, ski touring kit is essential, as having a pair of skins in your bag can be the difference between a good day and an outstanding one. Wrap up warm: South-eastern Europe can get a lot of snow and be extremely cold. There is nothing that could really be classed as nightlife so don't worry about evening wear.

Visas

A visa is not required by those from the EU, America, Canada, Australia or countries that are part of the Schengen agreement.

Money and currency

There are very few cash points – in fact some of the resorts don't have one at all – and some hotels don't take card, so you may need to pay cash for meals and hotels. Inform your bank before you travel so it doesn't block your card. The official currency of Kosovo is the euro. In Macedonia it's the denar, but euros are widely accepted.

Food

The food in the resorts is fairly standard – you can find pizza and pasta in most restaurants, as well as more exotic local options. Prices are outrageously cheap.

What else to know

The Kosovan and Macedonian approach is fairly laid back. The lifts often don't open on time, sometimes don't open at all, or if you're lucky one may open just long enough for you to get to the top once. You have to get into the mindset that things move slowly and just accept that things may not go to plan. Once you embrace the relaxed attitude, watching how things unfold becomes quite comical.

Cat skiing in Popova Sapka is well-established, with several companies organising trips. From the UK, see Mountain Tracks: www.mountaintracks.co.uk.

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Let it rain: a good jacket is one of the most important pieces of kit for hiking

Wet Wet Wet

As much as I'd love to be able to walk the earth keeping comfortable and dry in just a loincloth, all hikers need waterproof jackets, writes Bryn Davies. Whether you're mud-plugging through the fields of Warwickshire, jungle trekking in Borneo or bagging peaks

'While a membrane may be breathable in lab conditions, it's not as simple when you're out on the hill'

in Morocco, you have to be prepared for a downpour, so the importance of packing a decent waterproof jacket cannot be understated. If you're not sufficiently protected when it starts raining then you're going to get wet. If you're wet then you're more likely to get uncomfortable and cold, and an uncomfortable, cold hiker is not a happy hiker.

A good waterproof jacket for walking is one that packs down nice and small to fit in a rucksack – if you're lucky, that's wear it will spend a lot of its time. It should also weigh as little as possible, and have a good, properly

fitting hood (if you also hope to use the jacket for more adventurous sports like climbing or via ferrata, make sure the hood is compatible with a helmet). A jacket should have a sufficient number of pockets, preferably including one that's large enough to house an OS map. We also like jackets that have tougher material at the shoulders for protection against a rucksack; ventilation options like zips under the arms to let air in on a long uphill slog, and a longer cut for as much weather protection as possible.

How we're judging

We haven't put a price limit on the jackets, simply asking companies to submit jackets suitable for walking. It's interesting that if you're planning easier hikes you don't need to shell out that much to get a decent jacket.

We have looked at the jackets for their suitability on both day and multi-day hikes, in the UK and abroad. When rating them the overall score takes into account a number of factors, including (but not limited to): weight and packsize; features (such as the hood and pockets); ventilation and whether you get good value for money. As we're looking at the jackets' suitability for hiking, we'll mention if they have features suitable for other activities, like a helmet-friendly hood, but they won't be marked down if they don't. ▶

Possibly the most important item in your rucksack, Bryn Davies and Rosie Fuller put men's and women's waterproof jackets to the test...

What is a waterproof membrane and how important is breathability?

A waterproof membrane is a very thin sheet of tough, durable material with pores that are too small to let water droplets through, which is laminated to the inside of the outer material of a hiking jacket. The membrane most people will be familiar with is Gore-Tex, but there are other good technologies out there, often costing less.

The term breathability refers to a waterproof membrane's ability to allow moisture to escape from inside a garment, preventing the wearer from getting drenched by their own sweat. At least that's the theory. It's worth bearing in mind that while a membrane may be breathable in lab conditions, it's not as simple when you're out on the hill. This is because for a jacket to breathe the outside atmosphere needs to be cold and dry, whereas most people wear waterproofs on rainy days, and often warm, rainy days. That's why we find the best way to keep a jacket dry on the inside is to use other ventilation methods, such as rolling up the sleeves, undoing underarm zips, opening mesh-lined pockets, and opening two-way main zips.

FEATURES...

of a waterproof jacket

HOOD

If a jacket hasn't got a good hood it isn't a good jacket. Hoods should be adjustable so that they fit properly to the head and don't restrict your view when you turn. A stiffened peak is best to help keep driving rain out of your face.

COLLAR

A high collar will help protect your neck and chin from wind and rain. It should be snug and preferably lined with a fabric that's soft against the skin.

PIT ZIPS

Pit zips allow you to manage the internal temperature of the jacket without taking it off. They need to reach a good way down the jacket and the arm to be effective – there's no point in having them if they're too small.

CUFFS

As well as keeping the sleeve tidy, cuffs keep out draughts when it's cold and can be rolled up for ventilation when it's warm. They should be wide enough to fit over gloves and to be rolled up the arm.



ZIPS

It's impossible to make zips fully waterproof: they'll either be water-resistant or covered by a storm flap. Lightweight jackets tend to have water-resistant zips for less weight and bulk, but a double storm flap will be more effective. Zips should have quality zip pulls that are easy to use even if you're wearing gloves.

They shouldn't snap on the jacket's material, and two-way zips are great for ventilation.

POCKETS

A jacket's main hand-warmer pockets can be fleece-lined for warmth or mesh-lined for ventilation. They should be accessible while wearing a rucksack with a hip belt. Other useful pockets include one that's big enough to hold a map and a small, zip-up pocket for valuables.

HEM

The hem will keep warm air in and cold air out, as well as stopping the jacket from flapping around in the wind. It should be adjustable and the toggles should be easy to use with one hand, even if you're wearing gloves.

Montane Atomic Jacket

MEN'S

www.montane.co.uk

£110

The Atomic Jacket has been around for years, no doubt remaining popular because of its affordable price tag and its great, all-round functionality.

Waterproofing is provided by Pertex Shield fabric. The jacket scores highly in its packability, rolling up no larger than a bag of sugar, and its weight (335g for a size XL), so it's a good choice if you think your jacket will be spending a lot of time packed up in your rucksack.

The Atomic has Velcro cuffs, a drawcord-adjustable waist, which is easily used with one gloved-up hand, and a very good hood, with volume adjusters and a stiffened peak allowing you to get the best fit for your head. It's a surprisingly good hood for a jacket of this price.

In terms of ventilation the Atomic leaves a lot to be desired. There are no under-arm zips, and while the two pockets, which are large enough to happily swallow an OS map,



are mesh-backed, I wouldn't like to have them wide open just to get some cool air into the jacket, leaving the contents free to fall out. The zips have internal storm flaps to offer an element of water resistance, though I would have preferred more adequate protection in these areas, perhaps a more substantial double storm flap. I wouldn't be confident of the jacket's ability to keep me dry if I was out in heavy rain for extended periods.

In a line: A good, lightweight and packable budget option

9 /10	WEIGHT/PACKSIZE
7 /10	FEATURES
6 /10	VENTILATION
7 /10	VALUE FOR MONEY
7 /10	OVERALL

Jack Wolfskin Crush 'n' Ice

MEN'S

www.jack-wolfskin.co.uk

£150

You don't often see a three-in-one jacket these days – Jack Wolfskin's entry into this review seems to be attempting to reinvent a style that's become more associated with casual walkers than serious outdoor enthusiasts. But when you consider that you get a hardshell jacket and a mid-weight fleece for £150, the Crush 'n' Ice is an attractive proposition.

Waterproofing is provided by Jack Wolfskin's two-layer Texapore fabric, protected by a fully lined inner which makes the jacket very comfortable but also fairly heavy and bulky. The main zip is protected by a double, Velcro-secured, storm flap, and it has a large zip pull to make it easier to use in gloves. The fleece mid-layer attaches via two internal zips and three buttons; it's quick and easy to do.

The jacket disappoints in terms of



ventilation: there's no way of allowing in air other than rolling up the sleeves. The hood is fully adjustable and the peak has been stiffened, though in strong winds it will lose its shape.

The Crush 'n' Ice is a good jacket for casual use or on weekend strolls. For more strenuous outdoor activities, or if you'll be carrying a heavy pack, the lack of ventilation is off putting.

In a line: Value for money if you like the three-in-one option

7 /10	WEIGHT/PACKSIZE
6 /10	FEATURES
5 /10	VENTILATION
8 /10	VALUE FOR MONEY
7 /10	OVERALL

Craghoppers Ashton Gore-Tex

MEN'S

www.craghoppers.com

£160

The last time we reviewed waterproof jackets in *Adventure Travel* was in September/October 2014, when we had Craghoppers' Kiwi Long jacket on test, and it embodied everything that a traditional hiking jacket should be. The Kiwi Long was awarded Best Budget Buy in that review, and after that positive experience we now have the brand new Ashton Gore-Tex on test.

Like most traditional walking jackets, the Ashton has a nice, long fit. Waterproofing is provided by a Gore-Tex membrane, with a full mesh liner to help disperse sweat. The jacket is adjustable at both the waist and the hem, allowing you to get the fit right and keep chilling draughts out. The jacket's collar comes high over the chin and has a lovely microfleece lining for next-to-skin comfort. There are two large handwarmer pockets, although they become unusable when you



have a rucksack's waist strap done up. That leaves you with one internal chest pocket, although this is big enough to house a map.

If you want a jacket that you can roll up, stick in your rucksack and forget about, then the Ashton is not that: it weighs a pretty hefty 830g and folds to about the size of a football. But if you want a jacket that you can stick on when you're going for a stroll in the countryside or off into town, this is the one for you.

In a line: A very nice jacket for casual strolls and dog walks



6/10	WEIGHT/PACKSIZE
8/10	FEATURES
5/10	VENTILATION
8/10	VALUE FOR MONEY
7/10	OVERALL

Rab Atmos Jacket

MEN'S

www.rab.equipment

£170

I've yet to come across a piece of Rab clothing that has disappointed me. A look at the company's website shows the principles that Rab Carrington built the brand on: a deep understanding of what climbers and mountaineers need, and a commitment to practical gear that works. In the Atmos we have a waterproof jacket that reflects Rab's vision perfectly.

At just 306g for a size XL the Atmos, using a three-layer Pertex Shield + fabric, is seriously light weight. And this hasn't come at the expense of other features: the fully adjustable hood fits well, all zips are water-resistant and the large handwarmer pockets can be used while wearing a rucksack. Slim Velcro pads around the wrists allow adjustment here, though the cuffs are a bit too tight to roll up far.

While the Atmos is light and airy, when it



comes to ventilation it disappoints. Rab might point out that this is because the Pertex Shield + fabric is about as breathable as current technology allows, but I would always prefer to have ventilation options when I'm getting sweaty on the hills.

With its athletic fit, the Atmos isn't a jacket for traditional ramblers. But if you're into moving light and fast, it's a waterproof that won't let you down.

In a line: For those who want to move fast and light



9/10	WEIGHT/PACKSIZE
7/10	FEATURES
5/10	VENTILATION
8/10	VALUE FOR MONEY
8/10	OVERALL

Sprayway Halt

MEN'S

www.sprayway.com
£180

Sprayway describes the Halt as an 'insulated hill jacket.' It has a fixed layer of 80g thermal insulation and a two-layer Gore-Tex outer. If you're planning on being out in the cold this winter then the combination of the two will appeal, although it does restrict the Halt to being a winter-only product.

The jacket's cut is spot on, with a longer mid section providing extra protection against the weather. The hand-warmer pockets are accessible when wearing a rucksack with a hip belt. The jacket is comfy as well as being warm, although at 780g it's nowhere near the lightest on test, with the insulating layer also making it considerably bulkier when packed away in a rucksack, taking up slightly more room than a football.

The Halt's hood is fully volume adjustable,



with a stiffened peak that keeps its shape in strong winds. It can also be rolled away when not in use. A lack of ventilation on the jacket hints, once again, to its suitability only in very cold weather. This omission also means that high-energy activities will quickly see the inside of the jacket becoming sweaty and stuffy.

If you're into casual hiking, come rain or shine, the Halt will suit you well. It's a little heavy and bulky, but for cold weather strolls it's great.

In a line: Great for cold weather strolls

AT RATING	7 out of 10
WEIGHT/PACKSIZE	6 /10
FEATURES	7 /10
VENTILATION	4 /10
VALUE FOR MONEY	8 /10
OVERALL	7 /10

The North Face | Fuseform Dot Matrix Insulated Jacket

MEN'S

www.thenorthface.co.uk
£220

If there's ever a jacket that sounds like it's out of a sci-fi movie then it's the Fuseform Dot Matrix Insulated Jacket. Like Sprayway's Halt, this jacket has a waterproof outer shell and a fixed insulated liner. It also uses The North Face's new Fuseform technology, which does away with the need for seams, stitches and tape by weaving fabrics together, saving in weight.

The jacket is finished to a high standard. Waterproofing is provided by a two-layer HyVent fabric and the silky smooth insulation is Primaloft Eco.

The jacket has two hand-warmer pockets and an internal chest pocket, but none are large enough for an OS map. All the zips are water resistant and have large pulls. The jacket's shoulders are reinforced by a tougher fabric for



protection against heavy rucksacks. The hood is fully adjustable, and the insulation extends around the head which is nice, though the peak has a tendency to lose shape in strong wind. Velcro cuffs make it easy to roll the sleeves up, while two large pit zips allow you to cool off if you're starting to sweat, which is likely in this furnace-like jacket. Alternatively, it's also available in a non-insulated version.

In a line: Comfortable, warm and waterproof: a very nice jacket

AT RATING	8 out of 10
WEIGHT/PACKSIZE	6 /10
FEATURES	8 /10
VENTILATION	9 /10
VALUE FOR MONEY	8 /10
OVERALL	8 /10

Sherpa Lithang Jacket

www.sherpaadventuregear.com
£200

There are certain brands that you can't help but have an affinity with and, for me, Sherpa is muscling in with its excellent products and brand ethos.

The majority of Sherpa products are designed and manufactured in Kathmandu, and that's the case with the jacket we have on test here. The Lithang Jacket was named in homage to Lithang county in Tibet, where the weather can, apparently, change in an instant and a waterproof is essential.

The jacket uses a three-layer Himaltec waterproof membrane to keep you dry and the material has a slight stretch to give a comfortable fit when you're on the move. At 550g the Lithang isn't the lightest garment on test but it's by no means the heaviest, and it packs down to about the size of a large bag of crisps, taking up little room in your rucksack.

The two hand-warmer pockets are cavernous enough to swallow an OS map, and they're thoughtfully placed so that you can still use them when wearing a rucksack with a hip belt. A further two pockets on the chest provide additional storage for items you want to keep close to hand, and all zips are water resistant to ensure you stay dry (though it's still a good



Adventure

MEN'S

BEST
IN TEST

idea to keep any valuables in dry bags).

The jacket is somewhere in the middle of being an active fit and a longer, more relaxed fit: it isn't baggy by any means, but there's enough room underneath for a mid-layer. While the hood is fully adjustable and the peak is nice and stiff, it's not the best I've come across. It'll turn with the head but as it's made to accommodate a helmet it can feel a little big even when tightened to the maximum.

Ventilation is provided via two large pit zips with two-way zips, and the cuffs are Velcro and easy to roll up if you need to cool off quickly. Harder-wearing material covering high abrasion areas is also a nice touch.

All in all the Lithang is a superb waterproof walking jacket. I found the fit spot on; it looks just as good in the pub as it does on the hills and at £200 you're getting a top-quality product for a good price.

In a line: A jacket Sherpa can be proud of – it's brilliant

8
/10 **WEIGHT/PACKSIZE**

8
/10 **FEATURES**

9
/10 **VENTILATION**

8
/10 **VALUE FOR MONEY**

9
/10 **OVERALL**

**AT
RATING**
9 out of 10



Adjustable hood



Chest pockets



Big pit zips

Rohan Guardian Jacket

MEN'S

www.rohan.co.uk

£245

The Guardian Jacket is the first piece of Rohan kit I've tried in years, so I was excited to test it. It's a lovely jacket that uses Rohan's Barricade waterproof fabric. The cut is long enough for wet hiking, yet sporty enough for tougher activities.

With such a high price tag you'd expect the Guardian to offer something special, and while there's nothing that really sets it above other jackets over £200, it's comfy and the two hand-warmer pockets are positioned perfectly for use with a rucksack waist strap. The adjustable hood fits well, with the stiffened peak doing its job, and the collar has a soft lining.

The zips are water-resistant and the main zip has a full-length storm flap for added protection. There are three pockets: two hand-warmers



(large enough to hold an OS map) and a large inner mesh pocket. The jacket lacks any significant ventilation, so in warmer weather it will be hot.

There's no doubt that the Guardian Jacket is a decent piece of kit, but is it worth the £245? With a weight of 520g it's not the lightest, and with no ventilation, it's not one to wear when exerting yourself. It's a nice looking jacket, but if money's tight you're best looking elsewhere.

In a line: A fashionable jacket at a high price

7	10	WEIGHT/PACKSIZE
7	10	FEATURES
4	10	VENTILATION
6	10	VALUE FOR MONEY
7	10	OVERALL

Mountain Equipment Lhotse Jacket

Adventure
Travel HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

MEN'S

www.mountain-equipment.co.uk

£330

If you're after a waterproof jacket that will protect you from the rain while walking the dog, fend off the nuclear fallout after World War III, and everything in between, then this is the one. With a three-layer Gore-Tex Pro shell and 80 denier reinforcements in high abrasion areas, the Lhotse is one hell of a jacket, and it has the price tag to reflect it.

As soon as you pick up the Lhotse you can feel its quality. It's built to last. The jacket has an active fit with a long tail, and the sleeves don't ride up when you extend the arms. There are three external pockets and an internal chest pocket. The three outer pockets are all big enough to hold an OS map, and the hand-warmer pockets are useable while wearing a rucksack hip belt. All zips are water resistant and the collar rises up nice and high.

The hood is one of the best I've seen, with full adjustment and an excellent peak. There



are two large ventilation zips underneath the arms which allow cool air to enter. In terms of weight and packsize the Lhotse impresses considering how robust it feels, weighing in at 530g.

The Lhotse would be Best in Test were it not £100 more than Sherpa's Lithang Jacket. Both are superb; you won't be disappointed by this jacket.

In a line: A seriously good and seriously expensive jacket: buy it if you have the money

8	10	WEIGHT/PACKSIZE
9	10	FEATURES
9	10	VENTILATION
8	10	VALUE FOR MONEY
9	10	OVERALL

Regatta Cross Pennine Jacket

WOMEN'S

www.regatta.com

£86

Regatta is known for making good kit at entry level prices, and at £86 this is easily the cheapest jacket on test (both men's and women's) – so how does it do?

This is a good jacket. The fabric is waterproof, breathable Isotex 15,000 with a durable water repellent (DWR) finish. The jacket has a mesh lining, something that in general I'm not too keen on, but it doesn't make the coat feel too bulky.

The Cross Pennine Jacket scores highly on pockets. There are two main pockets with a soft lining, and two external chest pockets for valuables. Then there's another large, map-sized pocket on the inside: a great feature in a hiking jacket.

There are two fairly large vents under the arms to let air in when you warm up, and the Velcro sleeves are spacious enough to be rolled up for more ventilation too. The hem is easily



adjustable with one hand and the zip pulls have toggles to make them easy to use when you're wearing gloves.

The only downside of the Cross Pennine Jacket is the hood. It's spacious with a slightly stiffened peak, but the fit and adjustment aren't great. This is a shame, as the rest of the jacket, including the looks and fit, is so good for the price.

In a line: Great jacket, shame about the hood



8/10	WEIGHT/PACKSIZE
7/10	FEATURES
8/10	VENTILATION
8/10	VALUE FOR MONEY
8/10	OVERALL

Patagonia Torrentshell Jacket

WOMEN'S

www.patagonia.com

£110

Patagonia makes more technical jackets than the Torrentshell, but we're delighted that the company has submitted this one – it proves that you don't need to spend a fortune on a lightweight jacket that will keep the rain out while hiking.

Patagonia says the jacket is aimed at conditions like those found on Greenland's 'Banana Coast' – hot springs, icebergs, lush landscapes and a lot of rain (I imagine that the only one I'll encounter regularly is rain). It's made from Patagonia's H2No fabric which is waterproof and breathable; a brand's own waterproofing technology always helps keep the price down.

There are two large pockets, and the jacket can stuff away into one of them. There's no extra chest pocket though, which is a shame.



There are large pit zips for ventilation and the Velcro sleeves roll up easily.

The hood is spacious and easy to adjust. It has a slightly stiffened peak although we'd perhaps like to see more protection here. The main zip has a double storm flap and a large zip pull, although there's no soft patch at the chin. The hem is easy to adjust and the jacket is nice and long at the back. Looks-wise it isn't exciting, but it's a nice coat at a great price.

In a line: Light and a good price



9/10	WEIGHT/PACKSIZE
7/10	FEATURES
8/10	VENTILATION
9/10	VALUE FOR MONEY
8/10	OVERALL

Keela ProSport Adv Jacket

WOMEN'S

www.keela.co.uk

£124.95

The key feature of Keela's ProSport Adv Jacket is its waterproofing technology called System Dual Protection, or SDP. Keela says that the standard test method for breathable fabrics is conducted under dry conditions – conditions that in real life are only found in the desert. SDP is intended to be breathable in realistic conditions. It achieves this by using two membranes with an air gap in between: as with double glazing, this gap should stop the build up of condensation by preventing cold air from coming into contact with warm air. This double membrane also increases the jacket's durability, as it will still perform if the outer layer is damaged.

The jacket has a large hood which fits well (although you need to use two hands to make the adjustment). The main pockets are high to



keep them out of the way of a rucksack's waistband; they're also mesh lined for added ventilation. More ventilation comes from zips under the arms, although mesh stops them opening very far, and the two-way main zip. The hem is easy to adjust; zip pulls are chunky, and there's a large storm flap over the main zip to keep the rain out at this weak spot.

The jacket is a bit bulky. But if light weight isn't your priority, it's a tough, practical jacket.

In a line: Interesting technology

9 /10	WEIGHT/PACKSIZE
9 /10	FEATURES
9 /10	VENTILATION
8 /10	VALUE FOR MONEY
9 /10	OVERALL



Vaude Crestone Jacket

WOMEN'S

www.vaude.com

£170

This is a seriously lightweight jacket. It's so light that I was happy to take it cycling as well as hiking, particularly as our test jacket was nice and bright, great for road biking.

The jacket uses a waterproof membrane called Cplex Advanced. It didn't feel as breathable as some, but there are huge zips under the arms that really help with ventilation. I also really like the jacket's pockets: there are two large main pockets, one internal chest pocket for valuables, plus an extra pocket on the top of the left sleeve for something like a key, that you can stash safely in there and forget about for the rest of the day.

The hood is easy to adjust with a stiffened peak. The Velcro sleeves have plenty of space to be rolled up for more ventilation, and the main zip is two way which has loads of benefits, including allowing more air in. The hem drawcord is



adjustable through the pockets – I always find it easier if it's adjustable externally, but that's only a minor detail. It comes in a choice of three colours; the fit is longer at the back, which I like, and, like most Vaude products, it scores highly environmentally too – it's Bluesign approved and gets Vaude's Green Shape stamp, meaning it's made from sustainable materials, resource-conserving manufacturing and fair production.

In a line: Light weight and green

9 /10	WEIGHT/PACKSIZE
9 /10	FEATURES
7 /10	VENTILATION
9 /10	VALUE FOR MONEY
9 /10	OVERALL



Black Diamond Liquid Point Shell

www.blackdiamondequipment.com
£200

Black Diamond women's kit is some of the most popular at *Adventure Travel* HQ, mostly because of the funky purple colour, that Black Diamond calls amethyst, that many of the products come in. And as well as looking great, the jacket does the job well too – as we would expect from the technical clothing and equipment company.

Weight is a key consideration of the jacket – it's made from Gore-Tex Paclite, which is waterproof and breathable while keeping weight down. There are two large handwarmer pockets, but no extra chest pocket for valuables; this is a shame, but it will contribute to keeping the jacket nice and light.

If a jacket is going to have pit zips for ventilation they need to be a decent size and the Liquid Point Shell's are huge: great for when you're overheating. The Velcro sleeves are wide too, so it's easy to roll them up to allow more air in.



Adventure
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RECOMMENDED

WOMEN'S

There's a huge, helmet-compatible hood with a slightly stiffened peak and plenty of adjustment. There's a soft patch at the chin for when you've got the zip done up all the way. The hem adjusts through the pockets – I find it slightly easier when the adjustment is external but that's only a small gripe. The fit is nice and long, nearly covering the bum, and I like the reflective logos on the front, back and sleeve. And if for some unimaginable reason you don't like the amethyst, the jacket is available in black or green too.

In a line: Man we love that purple

8 /10	WEIGHT/PACKSIZE
8 /10	FEATURES
8 /10	VENTILATION
9 /10	VALUE FOR MONEY
9 /10	OVERALL

Outdoor Research Women's Clairvoyant Jacket

WOMEN'S

www.outdoorresearch.com
£225

The fabric of this jacket is instantly exciting. While many waterproof jackets are hard and uncomfy to touch, this one is lovely and soft, which also means it makes less of a rustling noise. And it's still technical, as you'd expect from a jacket of this price: it uses Gore-Tex's Active technology for waterproofing and breathability.

The jacket has two large main pockets, with mesh on the inside so they can also be used for ventilation. Then there's a smaller external chest pocket for valuables, which is headphone compatible. While the pocket zips are water-resistant, make sure you take extra steps to waterproof any valuables you put inside them.

There's a huge, helmet compatible hood with a wire peak and loads of adjustment. Sleeves are Velcro, with loads of space to be rolled up, and the hem



is easy to adjust with one hand. There are large zip-pulls, to make the zips easier to use if you're wearing gloves, and a lovely soft patch at the chin when you've got the main zip done all the way up.

On me the jacket is a touch short, although this won't be the same for everyone. Other than that it's a great coat, and it looks good too: the soft fabric has a matte appearance, and it's available in a choice of three great colours.

In a line: Lovely soft outer fabric

8 /10	WEIGHT/PACKSIZE
8 /10	FEATURES
8 /10	VENTILATION
9 /10	VALUE FOR MONEY
8 /10	OVERALL

Berghaus Tower Jacket

www.berghaus.com
£250

Introduced earlier this year, Hydroshell was Berghaus's most successful fabric launch ever, and the company has now added two new fabrics to the Hydroshell family. One of them is the 3L Hydroshell Elite Pro, the first new three-layer waterproof fabric that the brand has launched in 15 years, and it's used by the coat we have on test here, the Tower Jacket.

I really like this jacket. It's seriously tough and durable, using a heavier weight of the fabric in high friction areas for protection against rucksacks and wear and tear. Berghaus describes it as a four-season jacket, and I'd definitely feel happy trusting it in the worst conditions. It has a helmet-friendly hood with a seriously stiffened peak. There are two large main pockets; a small internal chest pocket for valuables and another small chest pocket on the outside. There are zips for added ventilation on each side



of the jacket; the spacious Velcro sleeves can be easily rolled up to let more air in, and the main zip is two-way, which has lots of benefits, one of which being that you can let more air in. The fabric has an anti-odour backer, great for long days out when you're working hard, and the hem is easy to adjust with one hand. While it's not the lightest jacket on test, focusing more on durability, it's still only 510g (size 12) and won't take up too much room in a pack. It comes in two colour options, including dark green (officially teal) which I love. Another great jacket from Berghaus.

In a line: A tough jacket for the worst weather

8 /10	WEIGHT/PACKSIZE
9 /10	FEATURES
8 /10	VENTILATION
9 /10	VALUE FOR MONEY
9 /10	OVERALL

**AT
RATING**
9 out of 10



Extremely tough hood



Handy external chest pocket



Ventilation zips, lower than usual

Millet

LD Montets GTX Jacket

WOMEN'S

www.millet.fr

£230

French company Millet is best-known for making top-end gear for alpinism. This is more of a traditional, heavier hillwalking jacket, with a lining, a button-away hood and a zip with a double storm-flap, but it's still up to the brand's high standards.

The outer fabric is Gore-Tex, which is waterproof, windproof and breathable. The two main pockets have a soft lining, to make them extra comfy, and there's an internal chest pocket for valuables. The large, button-away hood has a slightly wired peak; it's adjustable at the sides but not at the back.

There are ventilation zips under the arms which are mesh-lined: this means they don't open as wide as some, so might not be as effective at keeping you cool. But the Velcro-adjustable sleeves are spacious enough to be rolled up to let more air in too. The hem is adjustable with one hand and all zip-pulls are easy to



use with gloves on. The main zip's double storm flap seals with Velcro to keep the water out here. The fit on me is good: longer at the back, and slightly fitted while still allowing good range of movement and layers underneath, and the jacket comes in a nice choice of colours. I prefer a jacket that doesn't have a lining, so I might not choose this one, but if you don't mind that it's a nice one.

In a line: A traditional hillwalking jacket



7/10	WEIGHT/PACKSIZE
8/10	FEATURES
8/10	VENTILATION
8/10	VALUE FOR MONEY
8/10	OVERALL

Arc'teryx

Zeta LT

WOMEN'S

www.arceryx.com

£320

I took the Zeta LT hiking in Norway. It was cold and rainy and, as we were staying in mountain huts each night too, I really didn't want to get wet. So when I went to my pack and remembered which waterproof I'd brought to test, I was instantly reassured – you know that with a brand like Arc'teryx, you'll be as well protected as it's possible to be.

It's a great coat. It's made from Gore-Tex fabric with Gore's new C-Knit backer technology which is lighter, more breathable and comfier than the previous backer, while still being durable. It gives the jacket a softer feel too.

Another stand-out feature are the two main pockets, or rather their zips, which open in the opposite direction to normal. I wasn't convinced that this was any better than the old way, but maybe that will come. There's also a small internal pocket.



The fit's lovely – snug while still giving room for layers underneath and a good range of movement. I like that it's longer at the back too. The hood is spacious and easy to tighten.

The only downside of the jacket is that there are no pit zips for extra ventilation – I was searching for some on an uphill slog in Norway – but on the other hand that helps keep weight down, and the jacket neater. It comes in a choice of four good colours. **AT**

In a line: Expensive but a great jacket



9/10	WEIGHT/PACKSIZE
8/10	FEATURES
7/10	VENTILATION
8/10	VALUE FOR MONEY
8/10	OVERALL



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All about that base (layer)

Keeping you warm this winter, **Rosie Fuller** puts six long-sleeved baselayers to the test

It's getting colder so we need our clothes to keep us toastier, and the all-important baselayer is a good place to start. As it turns to winter hikers generally make the shift from light, short-sleeved baselayers to slightly warmer long-sleeved ones.

As well as keeping us warm, we like baselayers to wick away moisture when we get hot and sweaty. It's also useful if they're made from fabric that doesn't

smell too bad even if you don't manage to wash them regularly, whether this is because the material is naturally odour-resistant, like merino, or treated with an odour-resistant technology. Other features we like are a zip, for the option of some ventilation when we start working hard; seams that are off-set from the shoulders so they don't rub if you're wearing a pack, and thumb-loops for extra comfort.

In terms of fit, a baselayer should be long enough at the sleeves and waist so that it doesn't allow any draughts in, and the cut and stretch should offer the wearer a good range of movement. I use winter baselayers for everything from hiking and skiing to wearing around a cold campsite or mountain hut in the evenings – that's a lot of uses, so it's good to get the right one. We put six to the test.

Alpkit

Kepler Long Sleeve

£39

www.alpkit.com

Nottingham-based Alpkit, which designs its own kit and sells it online, is known for producing good gear at impressive prices, and it seems to have done it again with the new Kepler range of baselayers. The Kepler Long Sleeve is easily the cheapest in this test, yet it's still made from 100% New Zealand ethically sourced merino, meaning it's quick drying and odour resistant while being tough, comfy and light. The fit on me was nice and long in both the sleeves and at the back, and there are small thumb-loops. It was slightly lower at the neckline than others on test though, which might cause a cold spot. It comes in men's and women's in a couple of colour choices for each.

AT rating: 8/10



Subzero

Thermal Base Layer Factor 1+

£49.99

www.subzero.co.uk

I love this baselayer. I'm normally dubious of anything claiming to be unisex, which generally means it's a terrible fit on women, but this top fits perfectly, mostly because the material is so stretchy. This 100% polyamide fabric is also soft and comfy, while being light, hardwearing, breathable, quick-drying and anti-bacterial. The shoulder seams are off-set to minimise discomfort when carrying a rucksack. I also love the wide range of colours the top comes in, including fluorescent yellow, which is really useful for chilly running or cycling when you want to make sure you're seen. And a final bonus is that it's made in the UK, for a good price.

AT rating: 9/10



Mammut

Go Warm Long Sleeve Base Layer

£60

www.mammut.ch

If you're heading out on an adventure this winter and want to be warm, this baselayer is for you. A blend of 72% polyester and 22% wool creates a material that has been dubbed Pontetorto TecnoWool, and aside from sounding like a sheep's rave outfit, it offers benefits associated with both man-made and natural fibres. The polyester wicks sweat away from the skin and is quick drying, and the wool helps with the anti-odour properties (though I managed to make mine pong after two days of heavy sweating). The Go Warm also features body mapping for an unrestricted fit, and the low-profile stitched seams are comfortable against the skin. **BD**

AT rating: 9/10





Base(layer) camp:
Subzero's tops in action

Patagonia

Capilene Midweight Zip-Neck

£60

www.patagonia.com

Patagonia says that the Capilene Midweight Zip-Neck is the 'essence of versatility' and I'd agree - I get so much use out of it. It's synthetic, made from Polartec Power Grid fabric. The outer face of the fabric is smooth, while the inside is a brushed-back grid that wicks away moisture as well as keeping you warm. The fabric also has 93% recycled polyester content, and is Bluesign approved. Synthetic fabrics don't have natural odour resisting properties, so this top is treated with Polygiene odour control, so you shouldn't need to wash it too often. There's a huge zip for extra ventilation, and elastic thumb-holes. It's available in men's and women's in many colours.

AT rating: 9/10



Icebreaker

Oasis Long Sleeve Half Zip

£75

www.icebreaker.com

This is more than I would like to spend on a baselayer, but I do get endless use out of any Icebreaker product I own. The Oasis Long Sleeve Half Zip is made from 100% merino wool. It's soft, keeps you warm in cool conditions and breathes in warmer weather, with the half zip adding extra ventilation. And being merino it's odour resistant - I wear Icebreaker products for days without them smelling. Other features are flatlock seams that won't chafe, and they're slightly off the shoulder so they won't rub when you wear a pack. The cut is longer at the back to prevent cold spots, but we'd love to have seen thumb-holes. It comes in men's and women's in a range of colours.

AT rating: 8/10



Smartwool

NTS Mid 250 Pattern Zip T

£94.99

www.smartwool.com

The first thing you notice about this baselayer is the extortionate price. I'd need to remind myself that every piece of Smartwool kit I've owned so far (running kit and skiing socks) has performed brilliantly, and is usually my first choice from the kit drawer. The other thing that stands out is the looks - it's nice to see a top that's a bit different, and there are various patterns available. This baselayer is in Smartwool's warmest merino baselayer range, the Mid 250. The material is comfy and stretchy. There's a zip for extra ventilation and a collar to eliminate cold spots here, although sadly there are no thumb-holes. It comes in men's and women's. **AT**

AT rating: 8/10



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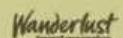
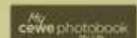
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Multi-day hiking packs (September/October 2015)



Men's	Rating
Osprey Atmos AG 65	9
Black Diamond Mercury 65	9
Vango Nanga 60+10	8
Women's	Rating
Gregory Cairn 68	9
Arc'teryx Altra 62 Backpack Women's	9
Berghaus Women's Trailhead 60 Rucksack	8

Hiking shoes (July/August 2015)



Men's	Rating
Lowa Renegade II GTX Lo	9
Millet Switch Low GTX	8
Aku Nuvola	8
Women's	Rating
The North Face Hedgehog Fastpack Lite GTX	9
Scarpa Zen Pro	9
Meindl Portland GTX	8

Three-season two-man tents (May/June 2015)



Rating
9
9
8

Gas stoves (March/April 2015)



Rating
9
9
9

Lightweight down jackets (November/December 2014)



Men's	Rating
Berghaus Furnace Hooded Hydrodown Jacket	9
Sherpa Nangpala Hooded Down	9
PHD Wafer Down Jacket	9
Women's	Rating
Montane Featherlite Down Jacket	9
Rab Microlight Alpine	9
Black Diamond Cold Forge Hoody	9

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www.redspokes.co.uk
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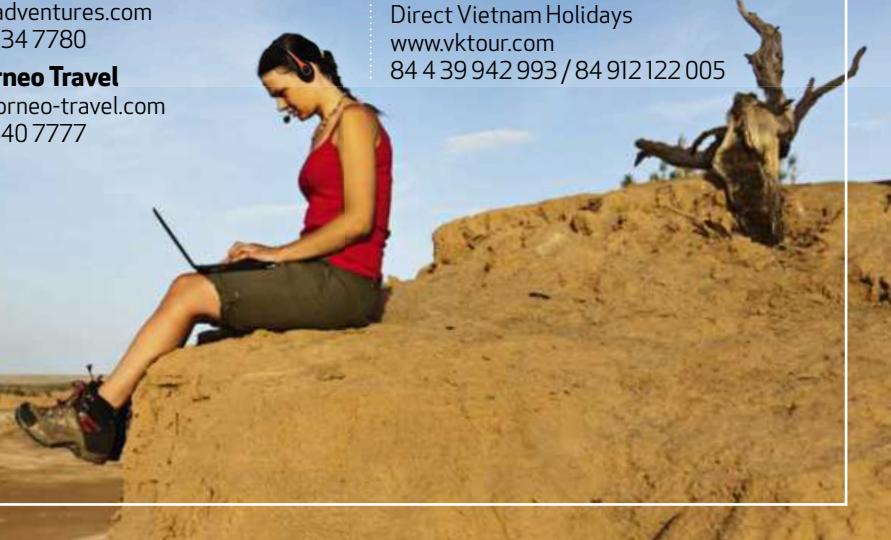
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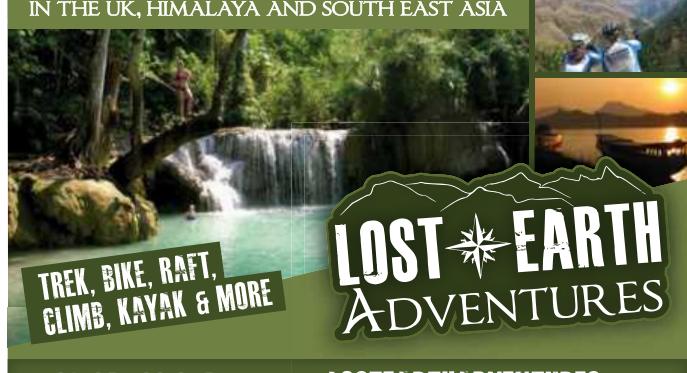


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EXPEDITIONS

Doing something epic, eccentric or generally exciting? Put it on our noticeboard – email rosie@atmagazine.co.uk

Photo: Mike Wilkinson Photography

Greenland bound: Edinburgh schoolgirl Julia Sanderson

Polar Academy: GREENLAND FOR SCHOOLS

Who? Craig Mathieson, explorer and founder of the Polar Academy, accompanied by ten 14- to 17-year-old pupils selected from five Edinburgh schools.

What? A 10-day, 100km expedition in arctic Greenland. Each pupil will haul their own 45kg sledge on skis and camp / journey across sea ice in sub zero temperatures.

When? Participants leave Scotland on 25 March 2016. Their hard training has started!

Why? Founded in 2013, the charity aims to inspire youth through exploration. It is life-changing for the pupils who currently lack in confidence and self-belief. Supported by the likes of Bergans of Norway and outdoor retailer Tiso Group, the charity needs to raise £170,000 each year.

Why should we read your blog? In Greenland the participants will also conduct scientific experiments for the European Space Agency. Follow the progress of the expedition that will see transformed pupils return to inspire their peers in Edinburgh and beyond.

www.thepolaracademy.org



Ocean rowers: team Square One Atlantic

Back to square one: ATLANTIC OCEAN CHALLENGE

Who? Sean Lannon, 31, Lee Felton, 30, and Tom Hodgson, 41.

What? Rowing 3,000 miles, non-stop and unaided, across the Atlantic Ocean, from La Gomera in the Canary Islands to Antigua, in two-hour shifts, 24 hours a day. We will start with all food for the journey, solar panels for power, a water-maker to filter salt from the sea and all the courage we can muster. We will avoid oil tankers, 40ft waves, storms, sharks and whales to become the Talisker Whiskey Atlantic Challenge 2015 winners.

When? The race starts 14 December and could take 90 days.

Why? The number of people who have rowed across the Atlantic Ocean is roughly equal to the number of people who have been to space. We are raising money and awareness for Sport For Freedom, which helps survivors of human trafficking, and Rape Crisis England and Wales.

Why should we read your blog? Our charities deserve so much recognition. We are also happy to take advice and inspire others.

www.squareoneatlantic.com



Everest girls: Tori and Anna

Serious ski session: ALPINE CHALLENGE 2016

Who? Tori James, Anna Shekhdar, Maria Leijerstam and Catryn Holzinger.

What? A team event called the Alpine Challenge, challenging four riders to clock up 150km-plus of GPS-tracked skiing or boarding over two non-stop days across the 15 resorts of the massive Portes du Soleil ski area.

When? 14 January 2016.

Why? We ladies simply cannot resist anything that involves snow, stamina and strategy. Between us we have climbed to the summit of Mount Everest and cycled to the South Pole. Now we want to have some fun and raise some money for Snow-Camp, a charity that provides inner-city children with their first taste of snow sports to grow confidence and gain life skills.

Why should we read your blog? For live updates of an insight into team dynamics, top speeds, strategy and physical state!

@toritweets, @BurnSeriesAR, http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/team/Girls_on_Top



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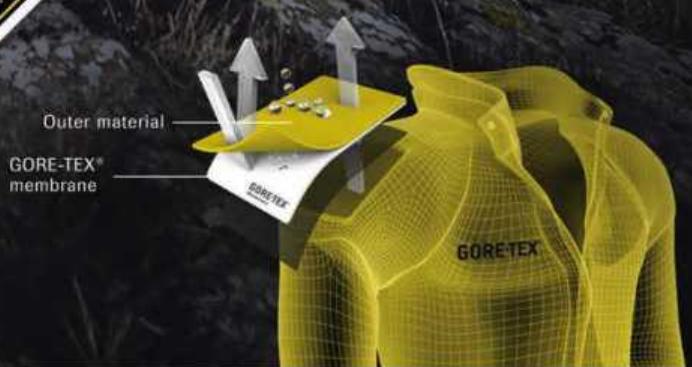
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